

II. The Life the Church Should Have

2. The New Testament Church

Prayer:

Our Lord, we worship You from the depth of our hearts because You are the Lord of life. Please use Your abundant life to provide for this conference. May this resurrected life liberate us from all our worries, revive our spirit and lead us to worship You with an open heart. Our Lord, bless this time. Please listen to our prayer. We pray in the precious name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The burden that our brothers gave me is to fellowship the life the church should have. Yesterday, I have already mentioned that this topic closely relates to the theme of the conference. This morning our elderly brother already reminded us that with regards to God's kingdom, power and glory, we cannot just treat that as a doctrine, but we need to incorporate and to testify that in our daily life. This is a very important testimony that the Lord has entrusted to us. Today, may our Lord through His church and His saints prove that the kingdom is His, the power is His and the glory is His. The Chinese translation of the ending to the above says 'until eternity, Amen', whereas the English translation simply says, 'forever, Amen'. God has entrusted us with some of His eternal matters. The Lord considers the church life very important. Brothers and sisters let us read some bible verses.

Ephesians 1: 23. Which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 3: 9 – 11. And to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 4: 17 – 24, 30. So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which¹ in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Ephesians 5: 1 – 2, 8 – 10, 15 – 18. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

Ephesians 6: 10 – 13. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Yesterday we already said this kingdom, power and glory belong to God all along. Our brothers have already mentioned many times that even though the enemy schemed to steal these away and God can

every easily directly deal with him, yet God did not do that. God purposed in His will to have men whom He created to manifest His kingdom, His power and His glory. We know in the Old Testament, God chose the people of Israel to bear this testimony. But we see the people of Israel, in their fallen and corrupt nature, failed to accomplish what God had entrusted them to do. But what God did on them became a type and it shows us what the principle is. God ended the Old Testament since the people of Israel failed to carry out that responsibility. In the New Testament, we know God uses the church to bear this entrustment.

In the passage that we just read in Ephesians 3, the apostle Paul received the revelation and clearly saw the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God Who created all things; and that the manifold wisdom of God will be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This is the will that God purposed in His son, Jesus Christ before the foundation of all things. Thus God uses the church and we who have been saved by grace to manifest His kingdom, power and glory.

We clearly know that the church is the body of Christ from the Book of Ephesians. With regards to the body, our brothers previously have already told us there is life since we have a body. The body is for the life. But we know the body by itself cannot live because the body gets its life from the head. The body, for it to live, has to be directed and governed by the head. So, before we talk about the life of the body, we first need to talk about the head; we need to understand the meaning of the head. Then the body will know how to live on earth. We can say the body cannot live if it is disconnected from the head. In other words, if you do not allow Christ to be the head, the body cannot live normally. Thus when we talk about the body life of the church, the first thing we need to pay attention to is not the body, but we need to focus on Christ, the head. Brothers and sisters, apart from our Lord, the church does not have a head and there is no way the church can have the manifestation of a normal life.

The Head

We thank God that He gave us the four gospels at the beginning of the New Testament. These four gospels introduce the Head to us. These books talk about the thirty-three and a half years of the life of Christ - the Word Who became flesh. The apostle John wrote the Gospel according to John in his old age and he explained this matter very clearly. He told us, 'In the beginning was the Word'. We know the word 'Logos' represents the unblemished plan that God designed with His perfect wisdom; it represents His perfect will/purpose. Yes, in this purpose there is thought. This purpose can be explained by doctrine; this purpose can be recorded in words; and thus we have this complete bible. But we know God is not satisfied with just talking about the doctrine. God wants this will to be realized in the life of man on this earth. This Word has to be manifested in life. So this Word has to come to this earth and become flesh. Thus the Lord Jesus had to come to this earth as a man so that He could express this Word of God in His earthly life.

The Word Became Flesh

We all know there are important manifestations of the glorious will of God on earth. They are the kingdom, the power and the glory. The Lord taught His disciples to pray for the kingdom, the power and the glory. The kingdom, glory and power are one of the important contents in the glorious will of God. We thank our God; we will not know what kingdom, power and glory is without the four gospels to record the life of our Lord Jesus on earth and to tell us how Jesus through His earthly life manifested the kingdom, power and glory. The four gospels clearly tell us that He is king of the kingdom. Even though when He was on earth, He had no stately form or majesty; He was only a carpenter's son; He came from Nazareth, yet when He walked among the people of Israel, He manifested the royal honor and He showed forth the kingly power.

Brothers and sisters, it was our Lord Who brought the reality of the kingdom to the earth. He not only was the reality of the kingdom, He is also the power. Thus He was very powerful in His words and deeds. The four gospels recorded that not only did He rule over the natural realm; we all know those stories but Jesus had calmed the waves and the winds in the sea of Galilee. The Lord only said 'be still'

and everything calmed down. Thus the disciples were all amazed: what man is this that the wind and the sea obeyed Him? He not only controlled everything in the natural realm; but even in the supernatural and spiritual realm, we see He also has the power over them. All evil spirits and Satan submit to His power. He was the one Who manifested this power. Of course, He also is the glory. He glorified God when He was on earth. Brothers and sisters, especially on the night of the Passover when Judas was about to betray the Lord Jesus, Jesus said ‘Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him’. This morning our brother already gave us a detail sharing on this matter. We do not need to say any more on this. Thank our Lord, He became flesh and came to this earth as a man and through this man’s life, He manifested important matters in the glorious will of God. We know whatever the Lord manifested are in His life. We can say all these manifestations are a manifestation of life. Brothers and sisters, the kingdom is of life.

Kingdom is the Lord’s Life

We know that when the people of the world talk about a nation, there are territories, people and government; this is the nation in the world. But the manifestation of the kingdom of the Lord does not depend on these things. The manifestation of the Lord’s kingdom is life. We know in the Gospel of John chapter 3, when the Lord and Nicodemus discussed about the kingdom of God, the Lord said ‘Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God’. If you do not have this life, you cannot see the kingdom of God. ‘Unless one is born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’ Thus today, if you are to enter into the kingdom of God, you have to be born again. You need to have this life in order to enter into this kingdom. Because this kingdom is of life, thus only those who have this life can enter into it.

In Matthew chapter 13, the Lord talked about the kingdom of heaven. He told seven parables. The first one told us that the kingdom and life are related. He stated that the kingdom of heaven was like a man going out to sow seeds. We know the seed is something that has life. When this seed of life was sown into the heart of man, then the kingdom started to grow in man. Of course the Lord told us that we have

to strive to enter into the kingdom of heaven. This tells us in order for the life of the kingdom to mature in us we need to go through various difficulties. I do not think I need to go into details. Brothers and sisters are very familiar with this parable. We see that this life has different conditions of growth in us. Because the kingdom has to be manifested by us, we need to provide good growth for this seed of the kingdom; this seed of life. Thus in this parable of the kingdom, the Lord clearly told us kingdom is a matter of life.

The second parable told us that God uses us as seeds and sows us in this world. This tells of the spread of the kingdom in the world, that is, the work of the gospel. The life is spread through us and wherever it goes, the kingdom goes too. We thank our God that today, God's kingdom is almost everywhere in this world. So brothers and sisters we see the growth of the kingdom is within us and the spread of the kingdom is on the outside. All these are related to life. The rest of the parables in chapter 13 have something to do with life. So we know the kingdom is God's life.

Of course power is also the Lord's life. The Lord's power is in fact far greater than any other power. Our brother had already read those words in Ephesians chapter 1. So we know there is the surpassing power of God in this life. Not only is the power far above all rules and authority, but the Lord had once brought this life to death and this life overcame the power of death. That is why this life is called the resurrected life and it has the resurrection power. Brothers and sisters, today we all understand one thing, any time we live in this resurrection power, we will have power like Christ in our words and deeds. After the Pentecost, the apostles lived in this power of the resurrected life and that was why they were able to have good testimonies for this resurrected life.

Of course glory is life. Our Lord is glory. Wherever His life is, there is glory. We thank our God. Today, the kingdom, the power and the glory are all in His life. He had manifested all these through His bodily life when He was on earth. And today, He gives this life to each of God's children who have been reborn through the Spirit and saved by grace.

As He Is, So Also Are We

When we read the four gospels again, they not only let us see what kind of Lord He is. Today, many of God's children look at our Lord objectively when they read the four gospels. But in fact, when our Lord became flesh and came down to the earth, the manifestation of His living had a deeper meaning. He was telling us He brought from above this life to earth. And what kind of life was this? He first manifested this life Himself through His living on earth. When He was doing all those miracles on earth, His purpose was not to put on a performance; or just to show His disciples the great power that He had. I think the disciples knew in the latter days looking back to the four gospels' time, that the Lord was teaching them the life they would receive afterwards would be this kind of life.

Brothers and sisters, when we read the four gospels we can say what a life this is. It is totally different from any other life on this earth. But we thank our Lord; He became flesh and came to this earth. He not only accomplished the salvation, bled and died and redeemed us, but the more important purpose was that He brought this life into us who believed in Him. That is why in the epistles of the apostles especially that of John I, he could say 'as He is, so also are we'. I think these words should be our experience. The apostles followed the Lord Jesus for three and a half years. They observed how the Lord was from the outside. But after the Pentecost, they saw that the Lord, who now dwelt within them, manifested His power through them. It was just like the Lord manifesting His power in the four gospels time. Truly it was 'as He is, so also are we'.

So brothers and sisters, we know this is the glorious heart desire of God. Today, God gives such a life to us who are so weak. Not only did God hope that He can be manifested through each of the saint's life, but more importantly, God wants the church, His body to manifest this life. Yesterday, we have already mentioned the types in the Old Testament time. We see that when God entrusted His purpose to a person, He needed to change the way of life of that person. In the Old Testament time, the change is on the outside situation. This principle has not changed. That is to say, today we need to change. Today, the change is within us; the Lord has given us this life. So brothers and sisters, our change is according to the new life within us. We know daily living demonstrates life. Thus the life governs the daily living. We know this principle very clearly. So today, we who already have the Lord's life, God has a great

expectation in us; and that is for us to be like the Lord Jesus Christ, manifesting His kingdom, power and glory on earth.

The Body of Christ

We know in the first century, the apostle Paul was the first to get the revelation about the body of Christ. Paul understood what the body of Christ is. So when he wrote the Book of Ephesians, he told the saints that they need to live a life of the body of Christ. This is a very important matter. We know the Book of Ephesians is divided into two parts. The first part is from chapter 1: 4 to chapter 4:16. That is the revelation of the glorious purpose of God. It tells us God has to build up the Church to be the body of Christ. From the very beginning of the creation of the world, the plan already started to take form in the heart of God. Paul gave us a very complete explanation of how the plan is to be carried out, how it is to be built up. But Paul's words did not stop at chapter 4:16. He continued on to the second half. The second half is on the living out of the eternal purpose of God. That is, God wants to reveal His purpose through the Church and through the body life.

We know the revelation pointed out this goal. Life is to go towards this goal and to manifest this goal. So we can say these two aspects are equally important. If we just have the revelation in the first half and not the life in the second half, the farthest we can advance is to stay at the doctrine. If we just have the second half and lack the revelation in the first half, then our life will not be accurate. So brothers and sisters, I deeply feel the church today, especially in respect to the spiritual life, is greatly indebted to the Lord. I think especially among our brothers and sisters, throughout these many years, we have received God's grace and have listened to many messages about the eternal purpose of God. These messages are indeed precious and please forgive me for saying this; that you cannot easily find these kinds of messages elsewhere. I ask Brother Kaung to forgive me, this morning as I was listening to the message, my heart was greatly moved and I kept thinking 'what a message!' Can we easily hear such a message? But today our Lord is so merciful to us. Our ears are indeed blessed. We can listen to messages that present so

clearly the heart desire of God. But brothers and sisters, do we just sit around and enjoy these messages? Please remember, now that you have listened to it and this is what God has entrusted to you, now you need to use the life to prove what you have heard. Please forgive me for saying this, maybe one day before the judgment seat of the Lord, God can use the messages that we have heard today to judge us.

So don't think that sharing the message is difficult; listening to the message is difficult as well. True messages are not just to listen to casually.

Paul clearly knew the revelation in the first part is extremely important. Without the revelation, we do not have a goal. But the life in the second half is extremely important as well. Without the life in the second half, there will not be a way to testify what God wants. So we ask God for His mercy. By the mercy of God, I want to share with you the few important points of life that Paul talked about in the second half of the Book of Ephesians. Maybe some of those are very familiar to us; but by the grace of God, may we remind and encourage each other. When God still gives us the chance on earth, let us live in this life and manifest what God wants in our life.

From Ephesians chapter 4:17 onwards, we see Paul told us what church life is. Because there are too many details in the book, I cannot explain every single detail. So I will just slightly mention some important principles.

Have Learned Christ

The first point is in chapter 4:20. 'You have learned Christ'. The condition of the saints in Ephesus was pretty good at that time, so Paul could say 'you have learned Christ'; that is, now you already have learned Christ. This is the first important principle. The bible shows us that the Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect model of God's purpose. We know among God's people, whether it was in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, there was no one whose image could be compared to the Lord's image. The bible clearly tells us we who are Christians should only learn our Lord Himself. But we have our faults. Many times, we will look upon some spiritual men on earth as images and we learn them. This is not only a

problem today, but it was also a problem in the first century. Many people considered Paul as the image and everyone wanted to learn Paul. I think Paul was pretty annoyed by it. Paul said, 'well, you can learn me, but learn the way I learn Christ'. It is true when we are weak, we can learn something from many brothers and sisters who love the Lord. But you need to learn the Christ in them. The best scenario is that you follow Christ yourself as you gradually mature.

Paul also said in the Book of Colossians that in the church life, everything should be according to Christ because this is the only image that God has given us. We know this verse is a very important focal point in the entire passage. If we live in the life of Christ, we would no longer be like the Gentiles. When will Christians become like Gentiles? Brothers and sisters, this is a very important reminder. Anytime you depart from the life that God gives you, your life will be like that of the Gentiles. We know after we are saved, we have a new life in us. But our old life is still in us. Thus if we continue to live in our old life, then we will live like the Gentiles. So to learn Christ is to follow the feeling of the new life.

Paul said you need to take off your old self and put on the new self. We thank the Lord. The word 'take off' that He used is very gracious; it is like putting on and taking off clothes. Because now you already have the life of our Lord within you, so you have to take off your old self. It is like taking off clothes that simple; it is very easy to put on clothes. God's grace is indeed great. You know how to do it even if you are a new Christian saved by grace. Who among us do not know how to put on and take off clothes? Unless you are a baby or you are disabled. Otherwise it is very easy for a normal person to do. Of course this old man and new man refer to the nature of life.

In addition, he reminded us we should not grieve the Holy Spirit but should submit to the sense of the new life. Brothers and sisters, there is a very good hymn which says, 'Lord, because I fear you, I have to submit to the smallest command that you give me through the Holy Spirit'. So today in our Christian life, every one of us should submit to the feeling of the spirit; be more attentive even in the smallest matter. I would like to share an example for the sake of the young brothers and sisters.

Once I went to see an ophthalmologist. All the people in the waiting room were Caucasians except for an old Chinese lady. I saw she was alone. I was wavering as to whether I should go and share the gospel

with her. I submitted to the Lord and I went over to her. When I came before her, she asked me first, ‘Sir, have you believed in Jesus?’ I said, ‘I have been a Christian for many years.’ She looked at me, smiled and said, ‘Did you just now want to share the gospel with me?’ I said, ‘You beat me to it because you submit faster than I do and you asked me first.’ Brothers and sisters, this is life. Christians should learn to submit to the Holy Spirit in the smallest matter. This is called learning Christ. When our Lord was on earth, He completely submitted to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Thus God gives the Holy Spirit to Him without limits. Our Lord spoke and acted according to the anointing. Today God has given this grace to each brother and sister. This is why we need to learn Christ in our church life.

Living in Love

In chapter 5, Paul told us to be imitators of God and walk in love. Simply put we are to live in love.

What is ‘to walk in love’? Paul said, ‘walk in love just as Christ also loved and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.’ Brothers and sisters, if we are to live in this love, we will be like Christ. We should also deny ourselves in the same manners as Christ denied Himself.

This is not a matter of outward conduct; we need to submit to how the Lord leads us from within. Since this is the work of Christ, He will lead us from within. So to live in love is to lead a life of self-denial.

We think that love is just giving someone a little goodness on the outside. True love is not to live within oneself. If our self will is too strong and our self love too much, even if we do a lot of good deeds on the outside, it is still not love. True love is not to live within oneself. This is such an important matter. Why are there so many difficulties in the church today? It is because we all live in ourselves. We talk about love but we insist on ourselves. Then it will just be doctrine. How we need God’s mercy; how we need God’s grace so we can live a life of love just like our Lord did.

Paul also reminded us in this life of love, we need to stay far away from immorality. We know adultery is an abnormal love. This is a very serious problem among people and in the society today, especially in these last days. We Christians need to be kept so the love we live out is a pure love and not a filthy love.

We need to stay far away from immorality. Especially for the young brothers and sisters, we ask the Lord

to deliver us from this evil and adulterous generation; to deliver our eyes from all these terrible things so we can live in the love of Christ.

This love also has another important reminder. That is, do not be greedy. We know the natural love is covetous. Only the love of our Lord is not covetous. So the second thing that Paul told us here is that we need to live in the love of the Father.

Living in the Light

In chapter 5: 8 – 14, Paul said we need ‘to walk as children of Light.’ We need to live in the Light. All of our conditions, especially in church life, should be transparent. We know in eternity, the New Jerusalem that we see is transparent and the light can shine through it. Thus our Christian life, especially in the church life, should be transparent with nothing to hide. In the Book of James, there is a description about our God, ‘with whom there is no variation or shifting shadows’. A brother explained this very well. Why is it that there is no shifting shadow? It is because God is transparent. For me, when I turn, there is a shadow. God turns and there is no shadow because God is transparent.

Brother and sister, we are children of Light. We need to live in the Light. When you are in the Light, what you show is goodness, righteousness and truth. And in the Light we can examine what is pleasing to God. So Paul reminded us that we should not do shady, unwholesome things with others. We ask God to have mercy on us, so we can live in Christ’s life that is full of light. If every child in the church lives in this Light, then the condition of the church will be much better, right?

Living in the Wisdom

In chapter 5: 15 – 20, Paul said ‘therefore be careful how we walk, not as unwise men but as wise’; that is, we should live in the wisdom. Paul told us the first thing in true wisdom is to make the most out of time. The original meaning in the bible is ‘to redeem back the time’. We know that God put us in time. What does it mean to make the most of your time and to make use of time? That is we need to seize

every opportunity that God gives us. When you are able to seize every opportunity, then you are grasping hold of time.

Brothers and sisters, fully scheduling every hour in the day does not mean we are making the most of our time. We know many people make plans. But then we experience what Romans 7 tells us. 'For the willing is present in me, but the doing good is not.' Some people naturally have a strong will power. I admire those people. Whatever they say, they will carry it out. But my will power is weak; I never plan, for I know I am not able to carry it out. Thank God that is not the way He wants us to make the most of our time. Rather, we are to seize every opportunity that He gives us. When you grasp onto that opportunity, then you are getting hold of time. Also God gives us grace. We can redeem the time we lost. That is why I really like what Peter said. He had a way to count the blessings. He said, 'with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.' Even if we have lost a thousand years, yet if we seize the opportunity of one day, then God counts that as a thousand years. What great grace that is. But sadly, often we do not even have such wisdom and we let a lot of opportunities pass us by. A wise man will seek out what the will of God is. He will often gather together with the children of God; to praise and thank God and to learn to submit to each other.

Family Life

From chapter 5: 22 – 6: 9 Paul spoke of the family life. These are very practical experiences in our life. I think we do not need to explain in detail on these. When I was young, I heard a brother said that the family is the most practical place where you learn your lessons. I did not quite understand its meaning before I was married. I knew these words are true after I got married. He even said, 'We go to meetings at the church. The reality of the church life should be reflected in our family life. Because when we go to a meeting place, we dressed neatly; we are very courteous. But once we are home, we will show our true self. Thus to have a good church life, we need to have a good family life. Brothers and sisters, this is not a request. This is something we can live out by the grace of God.'

Spiritual Warfare

After Paul finished these, he went on to talk about warfare. The meaning is very obvious. There will always be warfare in our life and in the church for the sake of God's kingdom, power and glory. How the enemy hindered the Lord Jesus when He was on earth and in His living, similarly he will use difficulties to hinder us who have been saved by grace. No wonder the church today is filled with difficulties. Brothers and sisters, this is warfare. Paul used a very good description. He said this warfare is like wrestling. We go face to face when we wrestle. We need to grasp onto it and not let go. It is a contact attack. So we know very well that we can experience this only in our daily life, right? Some difficulties are really so close to us. We cannot push them away. They just cleave onto us.

Paul went a step further to describe it. He said this kind of life is a life of grinding sufferings. This description indeed is very appropriate. But it is also something we are very afraid of. The grinding is a slow, long, grinding process. You know there are Christians who would rather die quickly than go through this long, grinding sufferings. Long, grinding sufferings are really hard to bear. But please remember this is God's will. Sometimes God allows things to happen to us so that we can manifest what He has entrusted to us. Thus Paul told us here that we should not be faint-hearted. And because of these days of long, grinding sufferings, the church has to put on the full armor. In fact, God has given us protection from head to toe.

Because of these periods of grinding sufferings, it is hard for us to stand firm on the truth. When the time lengthens, we start to doubt God's words. Thus we need to gird our loins with truth and not let it go.

Because of these periods of grinding sufferings, it is hard for us Christians to live a righteous life. So we need to keep God's righteousness in our heart and put on the breastplate of righteousness. Then our heart will not fall to the attack which will lead us to lose the righteous life. Sometimes we lose our burden for the gospel in these days of grinding sufferings. This description is very meaningful. He said this is a shoe, a shoe of the gospel of peace. If you do not preach the gospel, you will be like walking bare-foot.

Brothers and sisters, even though we are suffering, we still can bring the gospel of peace to wherever we go by the grace of God. Sometimes the enemy will shoot flaming arrows at us and cause us to lose faith. Thus we need a shield of faith to extinguish the flaming arrows of the enemy. We firmly believe in God's leading. No matter what happens to us, we believe it is in the Lord's good will. We believe all things are under God's control. This way, we will have peace within us. Otherwise, our inside will burn up from the flaming arrows. We need to have faith to fight off all these. One more thing is that we need to put on the helmet of salvation because in these days of grinding sufferings, we will think of all kinds of things. You know it is hard to control our thoughts. What is the meaning of putting on the helmet of salvation? On one hand, it protects your head. On the other hand, our thoughts need to be saved. There should not be any negative and pessimistic thoughts.

Brothers and sisters, God has given us the full armor and the weapons. We need to know how to use them. We use the word of God which is the sword of the Spirit; we pray for all things at all times.

Brothers and sisters, Paul knew the church life on earth will face many hardships and attacks on all sides from the enemy. We need to depend on God's grace to overcome all these. Then we not only overcome but we also can stand firm. And what is this for? This is not only for our individual experiences but more for His kingdom, for His power and for His glory.

Brothers and sisters, church life is very important. I feel that today the church life is the area where we are most indebted to the Lord. We ask the Lord to use His grace to uphold us. Brothers and sisters, today we need to live out all these in reality. Since it is living, it has to be in this life, and in the present time.

This also has to be local because the place where we live is where we can learn the most. This is also the body. We live in the corporate body of the church. We know this is quite difficult. Throughout these years, I have known many brothers and sisters who love God. But when they came across great afflictions, most of them have a feeling that they just want to flee from the problems. Whenever they stayed away, they felt peaceful; whenever they thought of returning they felt sad. But these are the lessons that the Lord has measured out to us. Every brother and sister needs to learn these lessons. We need to treasure the opportunities that God gives us on earth. Brothers have repeatedly said that the return

of our Lord is very near. It is God's mercy that we live in these last days. This is also the greatest opportunity that God gives us. Hope we can treasure these opportunities.

When I was preparing the message, I thought of a hymn 'His Angels His Countenance Always Behold' (Hymn 373). This hymn is a great encouragement to me throughout these years. Let us sing this hymn.

The Lord has given us so many precious messages these few days. I think we should have some response to Him. Let us use the rest of the time for prayer for every brother and sister to pray before the Lord with sincerity. May the Lord gain us. May the Lord uphold us with His gracious hand. May the theme of this conference become a reality in our life from now on. Maybe some of you are familiar with this hymn.

Prayer

Dear Lord, we all stand before You. We admit we are indebted to you in our daily life. We have received so much grace throughout all these years. You have spoken so many words to us, yet we have changed so little. Our church life is also weak; we have fell short of what You have entrusted to us. My Lord, this afternoon as we come before You, please forgive us. We know You are a God of grace. You always give us the opportunity. May today is our chance. Every brother and sister repents before You and once again we give ourselves into Your hands. Lord, Your return is near, yet it is hard for us to understand and we are insensitive to it. We ask You to lead us with Your loving hand. Please continue to hold our hands when we are foolish. Lord, You will not give up on us. Please give us the chance to follow You. Lord, let us redeem what we have lost so we can face You with joy on Your return and there will be no regrets in us. Lord, please transform us in our life; fill us with Your love. Lord, do not let us be stubborn before You but be tender in Your hand. Lord, may the words that You have spoken to us in this conference be realized in every local church. Let us use our life to attest that the kingdom is Yours, the power is Yours and the glory is Yours in our life. Lord, please remember our prayers. Have mercy on Your people. We give You all the worship. We pray in the precious name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

