

## WCCC2016

### Conform to His Death (1)

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The conference theme this year is “You are My Witnesses” and the burden I’ve received is to fellowship concerning “Being Conformed to His Death.” Or in other words, being conformed into the likeness of His death. I’d like to ask brothers and sisters to read some of God’s words with me:

Philippians 3:10-11

*“<sup>10</sup> that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; <sup>11</sup> in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”*

Philippians 2:5-8

*<sup>5</sup> Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Romans 6:5-7

*<sup>5</sup> For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, <sup>6</sup> knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; <sup>7</sup> for he who has died is freed from sin.*

Romans 6:23

*<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Romans 7:4

*<sup>4</sup> Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.*

Romans 7:18

*<sup>18</sup> For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.*

2 Corinthians 4:7-12

*<sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; <sup>8</sup> we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup> always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. <sup>11</sup> For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. <sup>12</sup> So death works in us, but life in you.*

Hebrews 2:9

*<sup>9</sup> But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.*

Hebrews 5:7-8

*<sup>7</sup> In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. <sup>8</sup> Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.*

Acts 2:23-24

*<sup>23</sup> this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. <sup>24</sup> But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.*

In Philippians, we see that the Apostle Paul had a strong desire to be conformed to His death, or be conformed into the likeness of His death. This should be the most important experience in knowing Christ. If we want to gain Him more, enjoy Him more, and manifest Him more, being conformed to His death is the most important experience. In other words, it is a necessary experience if we are to testify of Christ. This is why Paul had a strong desire to be conformed to His death. In the original language, being conformed means being molded into His likeness. For example, when a tool is made,

one must first have a mold upon which to base and produce the tool; this is what it means to be conformed. Brothers and sisters, no one could partake in the work the Lord accomplished on the cross- from the shedding of His blood to His death and to salvation. As mentioned in Isaiah 63:3, “He has trodden the winepress alone.” This work was and only could have been accomplished by our Lord alone.

But thank God, we can partake in and experience His death on the cross, as seen in three particularly important letters of Paul. First, we see a strong desire in the book of Philippians. Second, Paul clearly states the meaning of Christ’s death in Romans; he tells us that Christ’s death is a fact. Lastly, Paul talks about the effect of Christ’s death in 2 Corinthians. We thank God for entrusting the meaning of the cross to Paul in the first century. He is the apostle who was able to explain the meaning of the cross most clearly and completely. He had a deep understanding concerning the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, and his letters allow us to also have this understanding. The death of Christ is indeed a great and deep mystery; its depth is beyond measure and its effect covers all things.

We really need to thank God because we see that Christ’s death on the cross for us carries a very different meaning because our Lord is the Lord of life; there is no death in Him and He will never die. Hebrews tells us that because He loved us, He tasted death for everyone. Brothers and sisters, this is something that we cannot fully comprehend. This caused our Lord such great pain! It is no wonder Hebrews 5 states, “in...His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears...,” pleading “to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience.” Brothers and sisters, although our Lord only had a taste of death, this was an incredible price for Him to pay and caused Him much pain. Through His death, God put an end to the agony of death. So, we must forever thank our Lord for His death, for He loved us so very much!

God would never want to put His Son to death, but for your sake and mine, He did and consequently suffered such great pain.

We thank the Lord because He tasted death for us, but He also accomplished another death, which is the death of Christ. This death is an incomparable, unstoppable, and a sharp weapon. The death of the Lord has brought us so much grace and blessing. Even through the Bible, we cannot fully comprehend this because His death carries so much meaning and significance. For fallen sinners such as us, this death can defy all the powers of the enemy and difficulties of the flesh. This is an unailing method, and its power is great beyond our comprehension.

We must remember this: our great God has called us, who are weak and unworthy to be His testimony. Since the beginning of our salvation, our lives have been filled with difficulties. Without the Lord’s death, we cannot be His testimony. If this death cannot resolve all the difficulties in our life and dissolve all the works of the enemy, how could people like us be a testimony for the Lord? Our weaknesses and failures would only bring disgrace to His name. But thank the Lord that He

never forsook us. His gifts and calling are irrevocable because He has the power to change us through His death. We thank Him because His death gives us hope to testify of the Lord.

His death certainly carries much meaning, but at this time, we will focus on how the Lord's death resolves our difficulties. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the truth of the cross was recovered. At that time came to understand the great power of His death. This comprehension already surpasses our understanding. We may have increased worldly knowledge today, knowing that the greatest power in this world is nuclear power. However, an atomic bomb can only bomb you to physical death, whereas the power of Christ's death can bomb you to life.

We thank our Lord. The Lord of life tasted death for us and has given us this deadly weapon. Paul explains this in the book of Romans, which is a very important book. We thank the Lord for giving Paul the wisdom to write such a concise and important book. Without this book, we would only have minimal understanding of our Lord's crucifixion.

The first 8 chapters of Romans speak of a Christian's individual salvation before Christ, and from chapter 12 on, Paul speaks of the body of Christ, focusing on the cross as being central to resolving all our problems. Let us first place our focus on the first 7 chapters.

I believe that many brothers and sisters clearly understand that the chapters leading up to Romans 6 speak of how the blood of the Lord deals with our sins. Until this point, sins are always mentioned in the plural form. But from chapter 6 on, the death of the Lord deals with our sin nature- "sin" in the singular form. Many Christians today live in the condition mentioned prior to chapter 6. We know that the blood of the Lord can cleanse our sins. When we commit a sin, we come before the Lord and ask Him to cleanse us with His blood. Regrettably however, we have little understanding and experience concerning the death of the Lord as expressed in Romans 6 and on. In reality, we find that many of the difficulties we encounter personally or in the church are related to chapter 6 and beyond.

We know that death is a dreadful thing. Generally speaking, most of us view death negatively, and people fear physical death. But some Christians understand future resurrection, are thus do not fear physical death. For unbelievers, natural death is a dreadful thing because it leads to eternal destruction. For Christians, however, physical death is simply the end of physical time and the beginning of eternity. So for Christians, we do not fear the death of our physical body. However, there is another death created by the enemy. It is a spiritual death which will bring in destruction and perishing – a dreadful outcome.

Brothers and sisters, we thank our Lord that He accomplished another death on the cross. In Romans 6, Paul tells us that this death brings about an even greater outcome. Romans 6:6 tells us that our old man has been crucified with Him. In the original Greek, the "old man" is written in the singular form- it refers to the fallen, corrupt nature of humanity. We thank the Lord that only the cross of the Lord can deal with this terrible nature.

As Christians saved by grace, we have come to understand through experience just how terrible our fallen nature can be. We thank the Lord that through the work of the cross, the old, corrupt nature is crucified first. On the cross, the Lord established an unchangeable fact— we, who are corrupt, were crucified with Him on the cross. We have died with Him. Therefore, we must understand Romans 6:6. This is a very important basis for our spiritual experience, as well as the key to resolving all our difficulties.

In Romans 6 and 7, we see how Christ's death on the cross has resolved certain difficulties for us. In these chapters, we see that some of these difficulties are fundamental, root issues. If the root of these issues can be dealt with, then the outward circumstances can easily be resolved. If these issues cannot be resolved, brothers and sisters, it is impossible to have a normal life before the Lord and we will not be able to live for God, much less testify for Christ. So Paul clearly tells us what root issues the death of Christ has resolved for us. I call them root issues because these issues branch out to reach all areas of difficulties in our lives.

Generally speaking, Romans 6 and 7 mention 4 root issues resolved by the death of Jesus. The first is the sin nature. The second is death. The third is the law. The fourth is the flesh. We know that these 4 issues are the root of all difficulties. We thank the Lord that only His death could resolve all these issues. I will try to explain it simply.

First, we know that the sin nature is the root of all difficulties. Whenever sin appears, all beautiful things are destroyed. This is clearly seen when a Christian is first saved his condition is wonderful. However, after time, if he neglects to deal with his sin nature, problems related to his sin nature will appear. He who once appeared to be a wonderful Christian is quickly destroyed. This is also true for the church condition. In church history, we see that some churches first started off in a wonderful condition. But after some time of walking together, difficulties from the sin nature appeared and destroyed their good condition. This is a very dreadful thing, but we thank the Lord. Paul tells us that when our individual lives are crucified with the Lord, He abolishes the body of sin. Although the sin nature may still be present, the one who commit sins is dead. So naturally, we no longer need to be slaves to sin. We know this is true and Paul tells us that this truth can be applied to our lives. Once we realize that we have been crucified with Christ, we no longer need to sin and we no longer present ourselves as instruments to unrighteousness. We no longer allow sin to reign over us because Paul tells us that the body of sin has been dealt with. This is a wonderful thing, and can be a true experience for Christians. Because I believe that many brothers and sisters have an understanding of this truth, I speak these words as a simple reminder.

Secondly, He has dealt with the issue of death because Romans tells us that the wages of sin is death. In our lives, we clearly understand that committing sins results in death. It may not be a physical death, but it is a spiritual death. And spiritual death is very dreadful. We see this very clearly among

the saints. When someone encounters such a death, it is very clear— he who was once proactive becomes passive, positive becomes negative, hopeful becomes despairing, and zealous becomes indifferent. These are results of spiritual death. So, brothers and sisters, this death seems to bring all things to an end. When sin is present, all wonderful, good things are destroyed. When death is present, what once was normal ceases. In our service, we have also experienced that when someone enters into such a death, any encouragement or exhortation will be useless. I believe that you and I have encountered such experiences in our past service. But thank the Lord – only the death of the Lord can heal such a condition. The Lord’s death has rendered powerless he who holds the power of death. We thank the Lord. He died to turn a curse into a blessing. Time and again, we witness and experience how the Lord uses His own death to abolish the death brought about by the enemy. Not only does it resolve personal issues, but even issues of the corporate body. These are root difficulties.

Thirdly, His death resolved the issue of the law. We know that the law is God’s demand of righteousness; it is good. But the law is deficient in that man cannot fulfill its expectations, which consequently creates a sense of guilt. In Romans 7, Paul tells us that we can die to the law through the death of Christ. The Lord has dealt with the issue of being bound by the law. Returning to Old Testament, we can better understand this concept as we consider the people of Israel. God gave the people of Israel the law, and the law was supposed to set them free. Instead, it became the greatest bondage for them. When the Lord Jesus Christ came to the world, Judaism was very much bound by the law because the law created many forms, regulations, and methods. This greatly bound the conscience of God’s people.

As we gather, we come from many different backgrounds and may have our own traditions and forms for our respective gatherings. Yet we do not experience conflict when we gather together to praise and worship the Lord. Brothers and sisters, you may have experienced this. But if you are to ask the following question, “Where exactly do you meet?” many differences may arise. Because our gatherings have differing traditions, we may see bondage in many forms. But thank the Lord, Ephesians 2 tells us that the Lord has accomplished peace and unity through His body. He has removed bondage of all forms through the Lord’s death.

Fourthly, He has resolved the issue of the flesh. As we speak of this, it may echo deeply in us because we live in this flesh today. Paul tells us that the flesh is manifested in such a way, “the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.” The issue of the flesh is difficult to deal with in our spiritual life and service. Generally speaking, we can see the flesh is expressed in two ways among brothers and sisters. On the passive side, it is the desire to indulge oneself with comfort and joy. On the active side, it is the desire to work hard for the Lord. This is clearly seen among Christians. Man’s flesh is a very scary thing.

Brother Darby once said that the flesh of man is the factory of the enemy. The enemy is doing his work, but where is his factory on earth? It is in our flesh. We must be reminded that it is our flesh that is controlled most easily by the enemy. When Paul was alive, he sighed much over his own flesh. He

said that it is the body of death, and that he was indeed a wretched man. As we follow the Lord, we feel that we struggle greatly in this area because it is very hard for us to overcome. But thank the Lord He has accomplished salvation for us. Romans 8 says that by the Spirit we can put to death the deeds of the flesh. The Holy Spirit will use the work of the cross to put to death the deeds of the flesh.

Brothers and sisters, we see that Paul explains the meaning of the death of Christ in the book of Romans. This death is the most useful, effective weapon in resolving all these issues. It is no wonder Paul felt so strongly about the Lord's death. He had such a strong desire to be conformed to the likeness of Christ's death. In Romans 6, Paul also says that as we are baptized into the name of the Lord; we are united in the likeness of His death and in the likeness of His resurrection. Paul uses a few important terms. He talks about the likeness of this death. After we are baptized, we are united in the likeness of His death. Some brothers in church history explained this: on one hand, being united is to be identified; on the other hand, it is to be planted. When you are baptized into the Lord, you have been planted into His death. Being planted also necessarily speaks of living and growing. From a seed, we can grow into a tree. Therefore Paul says, "I want to be conformed into His death and united in the likeness of His death." Why did he use the term "likeness?" We know that in this world, many people use their own effort by moral or religious means, which may also have a likeness. So Paul speaks of likeness of His death, which is different from all other likenesses, and makes it clear that the Lord's death is not a moral effort. Sometimes we cannot distinguish between the two. We may consider people's moral expression as good spiritual expression, but they are actually different.

Here is an example as an illustration: I don't remember the book in which I read this, but it was said that the founder of the Seventh Day Adventists, Mrs. White, had very good moral standards. She was once scolded and rebuked by another person, but she maintained a smile on her face. Her good friend said to her, "Wow! You have such moral excellence." Because she was a good friend, she responded, "Although you may see my smiling countenance, do you know this? It is as if a volcano is erupting within my heart." Brothers and sisters, this is not the death of the Lord. True death of the Lord would mean rest from the inside out. It is not a moral effort, nor religious practice. We see people from all kinds of religions have seemingly good conduct and morals. As they face difficulties and misunderstandings, they may show some capacity of forbearance, which appears to be a likeness. But Paul tells us that the death of the Lord has a specific likeness. It is our hope that we would be able to distinguish between these things in our church life. The likeness that originates from the death of the Lord is completely different.

As I sought before the Lord in His Word, I tried to find a way to describe the likeness of His death. Although we may have some understanding, it may not be quite complete. Suddenly, Philippians 2 came to me. Thank the Lord that our brother already gave a very good explanation on this chapter last night because here it speaks of the mind of Christ. Our brother used a term that I really like: attitude. I believe this is a certain state or condition. This is the mind of Christ, but as we read through it carefully, we discover that it is the mind of the cross. What is being expressed are the wonderful virtues of our Lord Jesus, but we see that we cannot attain to any of them without the death of Christ.

We may also say that the mind of Christ includes the death of Christ. Thank the Lord that these simple verses allow us to see this likeness.

I would like to use Philippians 2 to explain the likeness of His death. We mentioned that the death of Christ is a great mystery, but it is not something abstract; it can be put into practice. In Philippians 2, we see that every point can be put into practice. When the Lord Jesus came to this world, He already had an attitude of death. Therefore, He could have this wonderful expression. This should also become our experience in life today. I would like to explain these 7 points simply, describing these 7 points as 7 steps. To what ought we pay attention? That these 7 steps do not ascend, rather descend. Paul wants us to have this mindset. Our natural man would like to ascend upward, but the mind of Christ steps downward. The Lord has set an example for us- our responsibility is simply to step downward and God will be responsible for exalting us. That is the safe way. On this earth, we can see that many people put a lot of effort to ascend upward, but the higher they climb, the harder they fall. So, it is actually safer to step downward. Pray that the Lord would give us this mind of Christ.

What are these 7 points? The first is that He did not grasp. Although He existed in the form of God, He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. In the original language, it means that He did not insist or did not grab. In the morning, our elderly brother already mentioned this. The mind of the devil is to grab, but the mind of the Son of God is not to grab nor insist. We know that in our church service today, not grabbing is very difficult for our natural man. We cannot do it without the death of Christ. We see that this is the origin for all kinds of difficulties.

Second: He emptied Himself. We know that He emptied Himself of all things but His deity. This is the great expression of our Lord. When He came to this world and came out to serve at the age of 30, He first came to the Jordan to be baptized, expressing a complete denial of Himself. He offered all of Himself to God, and emptied everything that was of Himself. It is very difficult, perhaps impossible, for us to empty everything of ourselves if we try to do it without the death of Christ. Because Paul knew the preciousness of Christ, he said, "...I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish." We often use these words in our prayers, "Lord, for your sake I am willing to count all things but rubbish." But as we open our eyes, we begin grabbing rubbish and have not completely consecrated ourselves. It is easy to say the words, but not easy to do it. It can only be done when we have been crucified with Christ. Only our Lord came into this world and saw all as dead; He forsook all for the heart and will of God. Therefore, Paul wanted to imitate Christ. We see that Christ had this mind, so He was able to empty Himself.

Third, He took the form of a bondservant. We can see that "to take" is a voluntary action. When the Lord came to this world, why did He need to be a bondservant? It is because being a bondservant means to serve – the Lord willingly humbled Himself. It is something very precious if we can understand the meaning here and are willing to humble ourselves today. We know that is not an act of man and we are incapable of doing it on our own. For us, we grieve when we are humbled. Yet when we are exalted, we become prideful. Our Lord was humbled with no grief. When He was exalted, He

had no pride. Brothers and sisters, only when you understand the death of Christ and devote yourselves wholeheartedly to the will of God can we take on the form of a bondservant. Paul called himself a bondservant of the Lord all his life. He wanted to be conformed to the likeness of the death of Christ.

Fourth: He was made in the likeness of men. The term “men” is in the plural form here. On one hand, when the Lord became a man, He desired to draw Himself closer to men. He wanted to save all men. On the other hand, He was very plain in appearance because He was made in the likeness of all men. When the Lord came to this world, He became an ordinary person. We often enjoy the ordinary manner of the Lord, but our own desire is not to be ordinary. In this world, we strive and compete with one another to be someone extraordinary. Some people may have consecrated themselves to the Lord and do not compete in the world, yet when they come to church, they desire to be recognized, and better yet, gain fame, known to the world. We are not willing to be someone ordinary, but our Lord was willing to be an ordinary person. In our church life today, if you are considered to be an ordinary person, you may be quite upset. If anyone exalts you, you feel pretty good. But it is necessary for us to have a mind of death like Christ. Dear brothers and sisters, we thank our Lord. He is the Son of God- glorious and honorable- yet when the Word became flesh, He became Jesus of Nazareth. We know that this is an important reason why the Jews forsook Him. When He came to Jerusalem, people said, “This is the Messiah!” When the high priests, scribes and Pharisees saw Him, how could they accept Him? “He had no stately form or majesty. He had no degrees. He had not been highly educated.” If He had a Ph.D. or came out of a prestigious school, maybe then would they have accepted Him. They asked, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” because the Lord was so ordinary. Dear brothers and sisters, sometimes this grieves our hearts. Many things in the earthly church have degenerated. We like to exalt men and their achievements, and no one wants to be ordinary. But we see as our Lord came to this world, He was willing to be an ordinary person. Only in this manner was He able to serve all men.

Fifth: He humbled Himself. In the original language, it means “He made Himself small.” In the Bible, we know that the Lamb is the image chosen by the Lord. The Lord’s willingness to use a small lamb as His own image reveals the fact that He was willing to make Himself small. In Greek, when the Lamb is used in Revelation, the emphasis is on its smallness. The Lord was raised from the dead, ascended to heaven, and exalted to God’s right hand. He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Yet He was still willing to use a small lamb as His image. We know that as the Lord entered this world, He made Himself small, so the Jews despised Him and shamed Him. Imagine, if the Lord came into the world as the king of Israel. Who could shame Him? But He was willing to humble Himself. We truly hope that the Holy Spirit would put this image in us. The reason we magnify ourselves, place importance on ourselves, and are unwilling to be ignored is because we have not seen the Lord’s image. Only when we are willing to make ourselves small can we truly become followers of the Lamb. If you do not have the mind of Christ’s death, then how can you attain to that

condition? Thank the Lord that even before He came to this world, His mindset was that of death on the cross.

Sixth: He was obedient. His obedience was not forced, or because He had no other options, yet He was obedient out of His own willingness. In our spiritual experience, we know that obedience is a difficult lesson to learn. If obedience is not derived from the death of the Lord, then it is impossible for us to obey. So brothers and sisters, we need to learn to be obedient because obedience brings the most glory to God. Satan has planted the character of rebellion in every one of us. If we want to testify for the Lord today, we need to learn to be obedient. Only through the death of the Lord can we become obedient like He was.

Seventh: He died on the cross. The greatest experience on the cross is death. Only death on the cross is the true likeness of the Lord's death. Brothers and sisters, the precious word in Philippians 2 allows us to see this likeness, which is the very likeness of the Lord's death. Paul says that we need consider and meditate upon this. If the mind of Christ becomes our own mind, then our service will naturally testify of the Lord, just like the Lord testified of the Father. We will become His witnesses. For Paul's days on earth, he did a lot of work, preached many messages, wrote many letters, and yet in the depth of his heart, his greatest desire was to be conformed into the likeness of His death. He did not care much about gifts or power, but rather only on this— that if he was conformed into the likeness of His death, he could testify of the Lord, and subsequently know Christ and experience Christ more truly. So today, being conformed to the likeness of His death is our experience, but the depth of experience may differ. Regardless, may Paul be a good example for us.

As we come to 2 Corinthians, Paul speaks on the wonderful effect of this death. Paul says that we have this treasure hidden in earthen vessels. Brothers and sisters, most of us understand that the treasure is our Lord Himself. But let us not forget, as the Lord is in us, His death is also in us. This death can produce a great effect so that we can resolve all difficulties. What does Paul say here? "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves." He goes on to say, "we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed." What power can sustain us in such an environment and propel us forward? "Perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed." We experience this because our treasure is in earthen vessels, and we know that the power to resolve all these issues comes from the death of Christ. Only through the death of Christ can these difficulties be resolved rather than remain difficulties. Not only that, Paul also tells us that only the death of Christ can usher in life. We all hope that our ministry is full of life, our service is living, and our service can supply life to others. Paul tells us that the death of Jesus will first work in us who are serving, to make us living. As we serve the Lord, we cannot supply life to others while being dead ourselves. Or sometimes we are very alive, but others are dead. Neither of these are normal conditions. Paul tells us there is a great treasure in earthen vessels. If we can be conformed into the likeness of His death, then the likeness of life will be first displayed in us who are serving. So today, if we are not living enough, it shows that we have not yet died.

Death is very important here. We already mentioned that this death is not derived from our own morals. Many times, we encounter difficulties in our service and we say, "What shall I do?... Just be patient and bear it." So, we grit our teeth and try to bear it. For a period of time, I was like that. I thought to myself, "I am a servant of God. I had better not allow others to see my suffering." So, every time we went to meetings, I would put on a smiling face. People would say to me, "Wow, Brother Sun, you look pretty good." But in actuality, there was a lot of grief and bitterness inside. When I returned to the Lord and prayed, I would often condemn myself, "I am such a hypocrite. I am truly a Pharisee. I put on this face, but it does not reflect my true condition within." Sometimes as we preach the gospel that when you believe in the Lord, you will be content and joyful! But as we return home, we feel pretty empty ourselves and become hypocrites. Brothers and sisters, we have not yet understood the death of Christ. We must know that we need to die the right way to produce the effect of life. If we die the wrong way, it will not produce the effect of life. This is very real.

As ones who serves the Lord, we must first experience the death of Christ in order to bring in the effect of life. Not only will this be manifested in us, but because we have experienced the Lord's death, that life can also be manifested in others. We often encourage serving brothers who experience difficulty or conflict between brothers, "Whoever dies first, wins." It is not the louder or stronger who wins. The truth is that if we are willing to die to ourselves, then life will be manifested in others. Brothers and sisters, this is not just a doctrine, but something practical as well. Paul had this deep understanding regarding testifying of Christ- the death of Christ is a necessary experience. We also need to be conformed into the likeness of His death. I think that is why Paul had such a strong desire in the book of Philippians. We thank the Lord that Paul lived under this principle all his life and he testified of the glory of Jesus in his life and service. He was a good example. We hope that this truth can be recovered among the people of God, and that we may serve our Lord according to this principle. Only then can we all bear the wonderful testimony of Himself.

Let us bow our heads and have another word of prayer together. Lord, we thank you with all our hearts. Because You love us, You tasted death, and You have also accomplished a special death which resolves all our difficulties. Lord, we want to bow down before You for Your suffering because You have loved us so very much. Lord, You are working Your death in our lives, so that we could also experience death, being conformed into the likeness of Your death, that on this earth we can also be Your witnesses. Lord, we confess that the reason of the difficulties in our personal and church lives is because we have neglected this truth. Regarding this matter, we are not like Paul having a strong desire to pursue after you. Lord, we pray that in this conference You would have mercy on us. Through your Holy Spirit, do Your work among us. Constrain us by Your own love so that we can follow Your footsteps. Lord, change all of our conditions, so that in these few days, we could truly bear wonderful testimony of Yourself. Lord, we ought to be Your testimony. Make us Your testimony, we believe You can do it. We give You glory. Hear our prayers. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.