

## **WCCC 1994**

**Brother Stephen Kaung**

### **The Unity of the Saints (1)**

The Gospel According to John Chapter 17 (entire chapter).

#### **Prayer:**

Our Lord, we have already read your words. Now we ask your Spirit to deliver your words to our heart; so that your words will become spirit and life in us and that you gain all the glory. Please listen to our prayer. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

#### **Example of Love and Parting Words**

This time we would like to use the Gospel According to John 17 to pursue the theme 'Unity of the Saints' before our Lord. The night before the Lord Jesus was betrayed, He gathered together with His disciples for the last Passover feast. Our Lord Jesus, having loved His own who were in the world, loved them to the end. Thus, at that time, He rose from supper and laid aside His garments, and having taken a linen towel, He girded Himself. Then He poured water into the wash hand basin, and began to wash the feet of His disciples. After He finished washing their feet, He told them the reason for His action. And that was He wanted them to love one another. That night He gave His parting words to His disciples. He told them He would be going back to His Father. But He have not forsaken them because He would send the Holy Spirit to them to be the Comforter. The Lord also gave them His name so that whatever they asked in His name, His Father would give them. He told them they would go through a lot of persecutions in this world, because they did not belong to the world just as the Lord did not belong to the world. But the Lord said that He has already overcome the world. He also told them He is the vine and they are the branches and that He and the disciples are in one. It was not that the disciples chose the Lord, but He chose them. And He sent them to bear fruits so that God can gain the glory.

#### **Prayer of the High Priest**

The Lord told His disciples many things. He then lifted up His eyes to heaven and prayed. This was the last prayer our Lord Jesus had on earth if we do not include the prayer He had when He was nailed on the cross. He prayed for His disciples before the Father. The prayer was not only for the eleven disciples. He

included all those who believe in Him because of the words of the disciples. In another word, He was praying for the church, for those who believe in Him throughout the ages. He poured out His heart's deepest desire. He desires His disciples and all those who believe in Him can be as one. We said it is our Lord's 'high priest's prayer'. He carries all those who believe in Him in His heart and on His shoulders and brought us all before His Father. He prayed that they may all be one, as He and the Father are one. The main point in this 'high priest's prayer' is His desire for us to be as one, just like He and His Father are one. In that prayer, He poured out His desire to God for He considers this matter to be extremely important to God, to the Lord Himself and to us. And because this is a very important and glorious matter, He knew this matter is what the enemy hates most and will attack most. And for this reason, He offered especially this prayer before God.

On that night the Lord told His disciples that He would be like a shepherd being struck and the sheep of the flock would be scattered. Peter said to the Lord that he would not leave the Lord and he was willing to die with the Lord. The Lord then said to Peter: 'Simon, Simon, Satan has demanded to have you, to sift you as wheat. But I have already prayed for you and when you have been restored, confirm your brothers'. Even though Peter loved the Lord, yet his love was from his flesh, so there was a loophole and Satan could easily attack him. But thank and praise God, our Lord foreknew this incidence and so He prayed for Peter. And because of our Lord's prayer, even though Peter was under the attack of the enemy and was being sifted, yet those sifted out were chaff and the good wheat was still intact in the sieve. Under the same principle, our Lord also foresees that the church will be sifted many times (attacked by Satan) because the unity of the saints is the most precious thing and can glorify God the most. And it is not just the attack from the enemy. Our Lord knows we are still in our flesh and we are weak. But thank and praise God, He had already prayed for us. And because of our Lord's prayer, the enemy can only sift out the chaff. Those need to be rid of. What remains will be real and can glorify God.

Our Lord prayed for His church. This prayer not only shows His heart desire but also His faith. Our Lord knows whatever He prays for, the Father will answer. In the Gospel according to John chapter 11, after the Lord Jesus came to the tomb of Lazarus and bade the people to remove the stone, He then lifted His eyes to heaven and prayed, 'Father, I know that you always hear my prayers. I prayed this for the sake of the crowd around me. So you can get the glory'. And then He cried out, 'Lazarus, come forth'. And Lazarus came forth from the tomb. Brothers and sisters, the Father has always answered our Lord's prayers. Thus, from our perspective, maybe we felt that the Father still had not answered the prayer of our Lord (in chapter 17) given two thousand years ago for the church. But we should look at our Lord and not at our surroundings. The Father definitely will answer our Lord's prayer. Our Lord has the faith that the Father already heard his prayers.

## **Believers Should Have the Mind of the Lord**

Today we ought to stand on the Lord's side. We need to trust that God has heard our Lord's prayer for the unity of the church. We also need to believe that by God's grace, we will be a part of that unity. The prayer of the Lord is for all those who belong to Him. No one who believes in Him is excluded. This is because the church is the body of Christ and we who are in Him is a member of this body. Can you imagine the body of Christ incomplete and not whole? We believe that all the members of the body of Christ are well fitted together. Thus, we should stand on the faith of our Lord and not be influenced by our surroundings.

So, the first thing I ask brothers and sisters to do is to forget what your eyes have seen or what your ears have heard. You have to forget all your experience of divisions in the past. You have to focus yourself on the Lord. You have to focus your thoughts on the prayer of the Lord. You need to focus your faith on the fact that the Father has already heard the prayer of our Lord. Then you need to focus on how to become a part of the answer of the Lord's prayers.

## **Start from the Source – Three in One God**

We need to start from the source when we talk about the unity of the saints. The problem today is that people do not start from the source when they talk about the unity of the saints. Whenever we talk about the unity of the saints, we immediately think of the following: how you can be one with me or I can be one with you. Or how they can be one with us and we can be one with them. And then we try different ways to bring about this unity. But throughout these two thousand years, we know people have failed to achieve unity no matter how many times they have tried. This is because the saints did not start with the source when they talk about unity.

This morning, we need to go back to the source. We need to talk about the oneness in the Godhead. The Lord said, 'keep them so they may be one, just as we are one'. From this we see that the oneness that our Lord wants is the oneness that the Father and the Son have in the Godhead. Any oneness that is not like the oneness in the Godhead is not true oneness. I hope these words can ingrained deeply in the heart of brothers and sisters. The Lord said, keep them so they may be one as we are one. True unity of the saints is like the unity in the Godhead. So, we will look at the unity of the Godhead. Brothers and sisters, please remember we are not here just to talk about some doctrine. But we all need to be able to see this truth.

We know God is a triune God. Even though there are three, yet it is just one. And even though it is one, yet there are three. This is a mystery which no one can explain. In the church, this can never be explained clearly no matter how hard people try to explain it. This is a mystery that God has revealed to us. We just need to accept it with faith.

There is only one God. Deuteronomy 6: 4 said, 'Hear Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah'. So, we know that God is unique. There is only one God. One of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20: 3 said, 'You shall have no other gods before Me'. I Corinthians 8: 4 – 6 also tell that we have only one God. Even though people in this world say there are many gods, yet we know there is only one God. 'This God is the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him'. I Timothy 2: 5-6 said, 'For God is one, and the mediator of God and men, one, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all'.

Brothers and sisters, when we read the bible, we know that God revealed Himself to us. Today all that we know about God have been revealed to us by God. If God does not reveal Himself to us, then we will not know Him at all. But we thank God that He has revealed Himself to us. In His revelation, He told us that there is only one God; and He is our Father and that is our faith.

Interestingly, in God's words and in His revelation to us, we see that though there is only one God, yet there are three in one in God. And they are of one accord and not opposite to one another. We can clearly see this in Genesis chapter 1. There it tells us that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The word 'God' in Hebrew is ELOHIM. This word means He is the supreme one. The characteristic of this word is that it is in 'plural' form. Thus, His name tells us even though He is the supreme one, yet He is in plural form. Let us look at the first three verses in Genesis 1. 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.....and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters, and God said, let there be light and there was light'. 'God said' is God's Word. And this is what is said in the Gospel according to John 1: 1, 'In the beginning was the Word'. Thus, we see that in Genesis 1, there is God, there is Spirit and there is the Word. And these three are as one. In Genesis 1: 26, when God created man, He said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'. He said, 'let us...'. Everyone knows that when we said 'we', it means that there is more than one. In Genesis 3: 22, after man sinned, Jehovah Elohim said, 'behold, man is become as one of us, to know good and evil'. Here again it let us see that in the Godhead, there is not only just one. Psalm 110: 1 said, 'Jehovah said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I put thine enemies as footstool of thy feet'. Here again proves that it is not just one in the Godhead. In Isaiah 6: 8, Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord, saying 'Whom shall I send and who will go for us?' Here again, 'we' indicates more than one. It is the same in the New Testament. In the Gospel of John 1; 1, it said, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God'. This 'Word' is with God. The word 'with' shows there are two. And then it immediately said, 'and the Word was God'. Even though there are two, yet it is one.

Matthew 3 recorded the baptism of the Lord Jesus in the River Jordan. When He came out of the water, the heavens opened and a voice out of heavens said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found delight'. And the Holy Spirit as a dove descended on Him and dwelt in Him. You see here, our Lord was on earth,

the Father spoke from the heavens and the Holy Spirit descended on our Lord. In John 10: 30 the Lord told us, 'I and the Father are one'. In John 14: 9 – 10 the Lord said, '...he that has seen me has seen the Father. Believe thou not that I am in the Father and that the Father is in Me...'. In John 14: 16 – 17 when Jesus talked about the Holy Spirit, He said, 'And I will beg my Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever, the Spirit of truth...for He abides in you, and shall be in you'. Do we know who has always been with us? It is our Lord Himself. But when He talked about the Holy Spirit, He said He will be with you forever and He will be in you. This proves that He and the Holy Spirit are one. In Matthew 28; 19 the Lord commanded the disciples to go to all the nations, 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them to the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. So, you see the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three but they are as One. In II Corinthians 13 and 14, Paul blessed the Corinthians, saying 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all'. Revelation 1: 4 – 5 said, '...grace to you and peace from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth...' Here again tells us there are three. There are also the living creatures before the throne, worshipping and singing ceaselessly Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty. One Lord Almighty has three holies showing that it is three in one God. Thus, in God's words, He already revealed to us what He can reveal to us. He revealed to us that He is a God and at the same time there are three in the Godhead. And these three are in complete oneness. Thus, it is still one. This is what the bible reveals to us and we cannot explain it.

Deuteronomy 29: 29 tells us that 'the hidden things belong to Jehovah our God; but the revealed ones are ours and our children forever, to do all the words of the law'. Thus, even though there are still a lot of things we do not understand about the Godhead, yet we need to keep those that have been revealed to us. Even though the word 'Trinity' is not found in the bible, yet we can see this principle and fact throughout the bible. And we need to believe and receive this fact because the Triune God revealed it to us.

## **The Meaning of Oneness in the Godhead**

Now we will look at what oneness in the Godhead means. We know the triune God is one in the Godhead. This is a fact and an eternal truth. Now we will look at what kind of oneness this is in the Godhead. If we can understand this, then we know what the unity of the saints are all about.

### **The Unity is Within**

The Oneness in the Godhead is entirely within. We need to coin a new word 'INNESS' – within. The Oneness in the Godhead is in the INNESS. In John 17: 21, the Lord said, that 'they may be one, as thou, Father, are in me, and I in thee that they may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou have sent me'. Here, the Lord said, 'as thou, Father, are in me and I in thee'. This oneness is the inness oneness. It is not like the unity on the outside where we like to gather together to plan, discuss, compromise and then agree. This is not true oneness and this unity can easily be broken up. The oneness in the Godhead is in the inness. We know there is no unity in this world. If two people are extremely close, we can only say they stand shoulder to shoulder, but we cannot say that he is in me and I am in him. Such concept does not exist in this world. And the world does not know what that means. But we thank and praise God. Our God is a Spirit. Thus, we see that His unity is in the inness. John 14: 11 said, 'Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me...'. Here you see that the order of the wording is different. John 14: 11 said, 'I am in the Father and the Father in me'. Whereas John 17: 21 said, 'As thou, Father, are in me, and I in thee'. These two inness – the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father are active. There is nothing forced upon them. Both willingly and actively are within each other. You see the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father. They are completely one in the Spirit. Nothing can break this unity. This is the unity in the Godhead.

### **Oneness in Essence**

The oneness in the Godhead is the oneness in the essence. In essence, they are totally the same. John 17: 10 said, 'all that is mine is thine and all that is thine is mine'. In another word, the Father and the Son are totally the same in essence. Colossians 1: 19 told us 'for in Him all the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell'. In the same book, it also said: all that the Father is, is hidden in the Son because the mystery of the Father is in the Son. In Him are hidden all of the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. The fulness of the Godhead dwell in Christ. (See Colossians 2: 2, 3 and 9). You see the essence of the Father and the Son is totally the same. It is not that there is more in the Father than in the Son. The Father and the Son are totally the same and completely equal. There is a saying that in eternity, in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are totally equal. There is no upper or lower, no in front or in the back, higher or lower. And because in the essence in the Godhead they are totally the same, thus they are completely equal. This is a very important perspective. In the Godhead, essence is only one, but functions are three. This is the second characteristic of the oneness in the Godhead. Today our unity must base on this oneness.

### **Oneness in the Fellowship of Life**

The oneness in the Godhead is the oneness in the fellowship of life. Our God is spirit and life. God is the source of life. Psalms 36: 9 said, 'For with Thee is the fountain of life'. Our Lord is the resurrection and the life. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life. Thus, we see that in the Godhead, their oneness is the oneness in the fellowship of life. What is fellowship? In Greek, it means 'common equal sharing' of the nature. Its nature is totally common and completely equal. And this is the kind of fellowship in the Godhead. Thus, this fellowship is a complete oneness.

### **Oneness in the Purpose**

The oneness in the Godhead is also oneness in the purpose. They are totally as one in the purpose. The purpose of the Father is the purpose of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. There is no disagreement among them. They are totally of the same heart and purpose.

What is the purpose of the Father? Ephesians told us that in eternity in God, He has destined a purpose and that is to have all things in the heavens and the things on earth to be one in His Son. He is going to make His Son the head of all things. He is going to give His Son a helpmate to enjoy and to bear the responsibility with Him. This is the will of the Father.

When you read the bible, you notice that it talks about a 'will' in singular form. Today when we talk about the will of God, it seems like there are many different wills. But in the bible, there is one highest will which rules over all things – the eternal purpose of God. This 'will' is in singular form. And it is that God wants His Son to be supreme above all things; all things in the heavens and all things upon the earth is to be summed up as one in His Son. And because God loves His Son, He wants to give His Son a bride. This is the eternal purpose of God. The Son amen with this will of God. He is willing to accomplish this will of the Father. So does the Holy Spirit amen with this and is willing to accomplish this will. So, you see that there is a total oneness in the Godhead on the eternal purpose of God.

### **Unity in the Work**

There is oneness in the work in the Godhead. Since God has this purpose, He started to work so as to finish this purpose. And you can see there is an order in the work. Originally, in eternity, in the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are totally equal. There are no first or last, high or low, above or below. Everything they have are the same. We see that to accomplish the eternal purpose, the second in the Godhead volunteered to lower Himself to be the Son, willingly submitting to the first as His Father and Head. Thus, Gospel according to John 5: 17 said, 'My Father works hitherto and I work'. In His whole life on earth, our Lord showed us that He was sent by the Father. We know the one who is being sent is lower than the one who sends him. (See John 6: 29 and 38,

13: 16). Thus, the bible told us: even though He is equal to God, yet He emptied and humbled Himself, taking a bondman's form, becoming obedient unto death, even the death on the cross. (See Philippians 2: 6 – 8). What did our Lord say in His entire life when He was in this world? He said, 'Sacrifice and offerings Thou will not; but Thou has prepared for me a body. I come to do Thy will. (See Hebrews 10: 5 – 7). All His life He stood in a lowly position. Thus, I Corinthians 11: 3 said, '...And the Christ's head God'. This is talking about the unity in the work. There is an order in the oneness in the work. In the different areas of work, they work in unity to accomplish that eternal purpose.

The Holy Spirit is the same. He was sent by the Father and the Son to the earth. He never speaks according to Himself but only what He has heard. He came to glorify the Lord Jesus. He never talks about Himself. Even though their works are different, yet they work in unity. They never fought who is higher or who is lower. They do not feel there is any unfairness. They willingly work together according to the spiritual order to finish God's eternal purpose. And this is the oneness in the Godhead.

### **Conclusion**

Brothers and sisters, I only mentioned a few points. You summarize them and you will see what the oneness in the Godhead is. In conclusion:

The oneness of the Godhead is a truth and this is our faith. We come to know a little about it because God revealed it to us. There are a lot more that we do not know. But we thank God that what He revealed is the truth and is our faith.

The principle of the oneness of the Godhead is our basis and our faith. We need to base our unity on the oneness of the Godhead if we are to achieve the unity of the saints.

The oneness of the Godhead is glory. This is the glory of God. And this becomes our worship. Thus, you see the four living creatures surrounding the throne before God, ceaselessly worshipping and crying out 'Holy, Holy, Holy! Almighty God'. And because they see the glory of God, they continuously worship God.

May we see the glory of God which is manifested in their oneness. Indeed, it is so glorious that we cannot but prostrate and worship.

### **Prayer:**

Our Lord, you are the glorious mystery that we can never fathom. We thank you because you love us and you reveal a little about yourself to us. You know how much we can take. But we ask you Lord, let us be able to receive what you have revealed. So that we will not lose the faith; that we will understand your principle and be able to truly see your glory. May your Spirit enlighten us so we



can truly and deeply see the glory of the oneness of the Godhead. Draw us to you! Please hear our prayer. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

West Coast Christian Conference