

**WCCC 1994**

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**The Unity of the Saints (3)**

**THE ONENESS OF THE SAINTS IN PRACTICE**

*John 17: 6, 11, 16 and 22*

*Ephesians 4: 1 – 16*

**Prayer:**

Lord, we thank and praise you! You are the one who call us into your presence. You are the one who call us to pursue after you. And you are the one who reveal your words clearly to us. We now ask you to bless your word and point us your way in your word because you are the word. This way we can go towards you. We respectfully lay down ourselves at your feet. May your will be done in us. In Jesus name. Amen.

**Only in the Triune God Will We Be Able to Talk About Oneness**

The topic that we are fellowshiping this time is the Oneness of the Saints. When we talk about oneness, we cannot start with the saints. We need to start with the oneness in the Godhead. It is because the oneness that our Lord desires is the oneness according to the oneness in the Godhead. Our Lord offered Himself up to the Father not only for the eleven apostles that were with Him, but also for all those who believe in Him because of the words of the apostles. In another word, the high priest prayer of our Lord is for the entire church. This prayer included you and me. He wants us to be one just as He and His Father are one. Thus, we see that the oneness of the saints has to be totally according to the oneness of the Godhead. Anything that is not like the oneness of the Father and the Son are counterfeits and substitutes. These are not what our Lord wants. Today we see there are many ways to try to be in unity. But if that oneness is not according to the oneness of the Godhead, then it is not the oneness that the Lord prayed for.

The oneness in the Godhead is the oneness within; that is, oneness in essence and in nature. It is the oneness in the fellowship in life. It is the oneness in the purpose of God. It is also the oneness in work. Today the oneness of the saints

has to be according to this essence and it has to be within. And this within is that we are one in God; we are one in Christ and we are one in the Holy Spirit. Anything that is outside of God, outside of Christ and outside of the Holy Spirit is not oneness. All things that are organized and made by men; federalized and temporary are not the oneness that our Lord talked about. We need to enter into the oneness. Only in the triune God can we be one. Anytime that we come outside of God; anytime that we are outside of Christ; and anytime we are not in the Holy Spirit (of course we are talking about our experience), then the oneness is lost.

Thank and praise God! Not only are we in Christ, Christ is also in us. He lives in us. If we let Him live out from within us, then we can completely be one with Him. If it is you or I or another who is living, then immediately there will be division. We need to let our Lord live out from within each of us, then you will immediately see the complete oneness. Thank and praise the Lord! Today the oneness of the saints is the oneness in life. It is because the life in you and the life in me is the same life. If we all live in this life, how can there be division? Thank and praise the Lord! Today our oneness is also oneness in purpose. It is not your thoughts or my ideas. But it is in the eternal purpose of God. Today if it is your thoughts or my ideas, then obviously we cannot be one. It is because you have your thoughts and I have my ideas. You may consider this is important; I may consider that is important. You may consider what you see is exclusive; I may consider what I see as the highest. How can we be one if we are like this? But we thank and praise our Lord! The bible shows us that God uses that unique eternal purpose to bring us into the oneness. Without vision, the people disintegrate. We need the heavenly vision. Paul said I did not disobey that heavenly vision. The vision from heaven tells us what is the eternal purpose of God. We need to see that the eternal purpose of God is to have His Son have the pre-eminence over all things; for the administration of the fulness of times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth and the things under the earth. And God in His Son, even before the foundation of the world, has destined to prepare a bride for His Son. This is the heavenly vision; this is the vision that can call us into the true oneness. And only in this way, can we be of the same mind in carrying out the work.

### **We Are One in His Name**

Also, in John 17: 11, our Lord prayed, 'Holy Father, keep them in Thy name which Thou has given me, that they may be one as we'. Here we see that the Lord has already given us the name that the Father gave Him. And this name will keep us as one. Thus, we see that this name and oneness have a huge relationship. Today we can be one because of this name.

We know that the name of a person can represent how that person is. A person's name identifies that person. A person's name also tells us who that person is and is different from other people. And a person's name also tells what kind of a person he is. It is a pity that today we cannot tell a person from the

person's name because they just casually choose a name. But all the names in the Bible have meaning to them. Through the name, we can know his character and a lot about him. Here the Lord prayed 'Holy Father, keep them in thy name which Thou has given me, that they may be one as we'. The name of God reveals God Himself.

You remember when Moses was in the wilderness, God appeared to him. Moses asked God, 'when I came among your people, what can I tell them who you are? What is your name?' And God said, 'I AM THAT I AM'. This name reveals God to us. It was the same with Abraham. God said to Abraham, 'I am the Almighty, all sufficient, all abundant God'. God revealed this name to Abraham. But no one can show the name of God as clearly as the Lord Jesus. Our Lord declared so clearly the name of God. In Psalm 22:22, it said 'I will declare thy name unto my brothers, in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee'. Thank and praise the Lord! It is because the Lord clearly declared the name of His Father to us that today we know a little about God. Though some of the commentaries cannot agree with whether this is the name of God or of Jesus. Thus in the translation of the Gospel According to John 17:11, there are two different translations. 'Holy Father, keep through thy own name those whom thou have given me'. This is one translation. Another translation is 'Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou have given me'. In some versions, it is translated as 'thy name which thou have given me'. In other versions, it is translated as 'my name', which means 'the special name' that the Father has given to the Lord. And the Lord uses this special name to keep us.

### **His Name is 'Father'**

What is so special about this name? This name is 'Father'. In the Old Testament, before the time of Jesus, even though God has revealed His name in different ways to His people, yet there was one name that no one knows, and that name is 'Father'. It is because only the Lord Jesus is the only begotten Son of the Father. Only the Lord can say: God is My Father. Even though in the Old Testament, there was mention of God was the Father of Israel, yet it is not the same. There is not one Israelite who can say: God is my father. Men can say God is their God. But there is not one man who can say God is his father. But we thank and praise God. When our Lord came to this world, He enjoyed and used this name. Thus, He said it all the time, my Father, my Father, my Father. When the Jews heard that, they want to stone Him to death. They accused Him of blasphemy: how could you say God is your Father? How could you say you and the Father are one? But brothers and sisters, this is a fact because God is the Father of Jesus.

We thank and praise God. Today He has given us this name. The Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is now our Father. The God of the Lord Jesus Christ is our God. When we are saved by grace, the Holy Spirit with our spirit cried out Abba, Father. And this 'Father' makes us as one. Because we have only one God who is Father of all, over all, through all and in us all. We all belong to our

Father. We all are members in a household. We all have the same life. We all have the same Spirit. Dear brothers and sisters, it is this name which keeps us as one.

### **The Glory of the Son of Man is the Reason for The Oneness of the Saints**

On the other hand, John 17: 22 said 'And the glory which thou have given me I have given them, that they may be one as we are one'. The Lord not only gave us the name which His Father has given Him, so we can be one, He also said He will give us the glory that the Father has given Him, so that we can be one just as He and His Father are one. What does it mean by 'the glory that His Father has given Him?' We know that the word 'glory' has been mentioned a few times in John 17. John 17: 5 said, 'and now glorify me, Father, along with thyself, with the glory which I had along with thee before the world was.' The Lord was going back to His Father soon. He said to His Father, 'let me return to the glory which I had along with thee before the world was'. This glory is one He originally had, the glory which He and the Father had before the world was created. And that is the glory of God the Father and God the Son. But then John 17: 22 said, 'And the glory which thou have given me....' This glory is not the glory that He originally had, but was given to Him by the Father. He said, 'I have also given this glory to them, so they can be one just as we are one'. So, what is this glory pointing to? It is the glory that the Lord had received from the Father when He was on earth. Our Lord was on earth for around thirty-three years. When He was on earth, everything He did pleased the Father and He did all things according to the will of the Father. Thus, the heaven opened to Him up three times and each time a voice from heaven said, this is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this is what Peter said, 'we have been eyewitnesses of His majesty'. Thus, this glory is the glory of the Son of Man. When the Lord came to the earth as man, He completely satisfied the heart of God, and because of this God glorified Him. So we can say, this glory pointed to the glory of the Lord when He was on this earth as a Son of Man.'

What is glory? Glory means satisfaction. Whenever the heart is satisfied, then glory is manifested. Now, the glory that the Father has given the Son, the Lord has given it to us, so that we can be one through this glory. And how do we explain this glory in us? It is Christ, the glorious hope in us. He not only gives us His Father's name so we can see that we all belong to the same family, but we all have the same Father which causes us to be one. On the other hand, He gives us the glory that His Father gave Him. This glorious life is in each one of us and because of this glorious life, we are one. Thus, the oneness of the saints is given to us by our Lord.

### **Oneness is an Accomplished Fact**

Today when we talk about the oneness of the saints, it seems like we still need to go search for it. It seems that it needs us to use our ways and methods to make it happen. Yet, when our Lord was on the cross, in His last moments,

He cried out: It is finished! This 'finished' not only points to the fact that He carried all our sins on Him, not only that our old self has been rid of; but this 'finished' includes also the old, sinful and divisive self that has now been redeemed and in Him we are as one. He already accomplished this work on the cross. Thus Ephesians 4: 3 said, 'using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. If the Lord has not finished this work of oneness on the cross, there is no way the Spirit can give us this heart of oneness.

Then where is our problem? The problem with us is that we do not feel we are one. If you look at the church, indeed it is divided. And when we see this condition, we feel there is no hope. A lot of times, we would rather believe in lies than in the truth. We accept the lies that we hear and see, and we say, there is no hope. If we look at ourselves, at the situation around us and at history, indeed we indeed will be discouraged and will lose hope. But if we can see that in Christ, the oneness is a finished fact, already accomplished, and is the truth, then our courage and our determination will increase. We see that we have to be one, but then we try to accomplish oneness by all means, by organizing, confederating, cooperating and even by uniting. Brothers and sisters, if you have to use all these means, then you are wrong. Because in the end, you will still fail and you will be disappointed and you will be messing things up.

### **The Truth of Oneness**

The first thing we have to be able to see when we talk about oneness is: oneness is a truth. What is truth? Truth is 'what God has accomplished in Christ'. This truth is an eternal fact. It will not change because of you or because of me. There is no circumstances or power that can change God's truth. Dear brothers and sisters, first we need to be able to see that oneness is a truth, a finished fact that Christ has accomplished. And the Holy Spirit has already given us this oneness. If you can receive God's truth, and if you can be faithful to the oneness that the Holy Spirit has given us, then this oneness will become a reality in your life.

### **The Reality That One Should Have**

The focus of the burden of the Lord in John 17 is the oneness of the saints. Interestingly, the Lord also talked about another matter in this chapter. And it is our relationship to the world. We need to be able to see the four verses that the Lord said. In John 17:6, the Lord said, 'the men whom thou gave me out of the world.' Here we see that we all are in this world. This word 'world' here does not just point to the earth, but rather more on the world being an organization.

The whole world lies in the wicked one (I John 5: 19b). Satan organizes the world to rebel against God. We are born into this system and organization. But

thank and praise God! The Lord said, Father, these people are those you gave me out of this world. We have already come out of this world. The Lord has saved us out of this organization.

John 17: 11 – they are still in this world. Father, I am coming to you but they are still in this world. On the one hand, God has already saved us out of this world and has given us as gifts to our Lord. On the other hand, physically our body is still in this world. Many times, we have thought about how nice it will be if we can just go to heaven after we are saved. Why does the Lord still leave us in this world where there are so many temptations, trials and sufferings? But God's will is always higher than the will of man. Even though God has saved us out of this world, yet He still leave us in this world.

John 17: 16 – They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Do you think it is strange? He saved us out of this world, and yet He let us remain on this world. Even though we are in this world, yet we do not belong to this world. We are sojourners. We still remain in this world, yet we do not belong to this world, just like our Lord who does not belong to this world. And this is how our relationship to the world should be.

John 17: 18 – I sent them into the world, just as thou have sent me into the world. Just like how God sent His Son to this world for a special mission, now He sent us to the world also for a special mission and that is to be His testimony.

### **We Need to Deal with The World in Our Heart**

Thus, if we have to have the reality of oneness, from the negative perspective, we need to have the correct relationship with the world. If the children of God or the church do not have the correct relationship with the world, then oneness cannot be realized. Today, Christianity already allowed the world to come into the church. The church has already sunken into the world. You cannot distinguish which is the church and which is the world. There is no way we can talk about oneness under such conditions. Did not the Lord say believers should not yolk with unbelievers? But today the church is united with the world. So, it is ironic to talk about oneness. Today this is not only the condition of the corporate body, it is also the same with individual believers. We should not love the world and the things of the world such as the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of this life. If we love these things of the world, then the love of the Father is not in us. If the love of the world is in us while we talk about oneness, then it will just be on the surface and no reality. Today if we still want to follow after the world, there is no way we can talk about oneness. The world has its own style and its own model. If we want to follow this world and the worldly trend, then any talk about oneness is like trying to find fish in the wood. I Corinthians 2: 12 said, 'but we have received not the spirit of the world'. How can we talk about oneness if the spirit of the world in us is still controlling us? The spirit of the world is self-centered, doing things according only to ourselves. How can this kind of spirit be one with the Spirit of God.

Thus, on the negative side, we need to have a correct relation with the world. Each of us needs to confirm our stand. If we want to see the oneness realized, we need to deal with the world. We not only deal with the world around us; we need to deal with the world in us. If you deal with the world, then you will be able to enter into the oneness of the saints.

### **Need to Deal with All the Sins**

Secondly, we need to deal with all the sins. Wherever there is sin, there is division. Wherever there is sin, there is cover ups (deceptions) and hypocrisies. After Adam and Eve sinned, not only was there division between them, they immediately hid themselves in the forest and used the fig leaves for clothing to cover up their shame. Brothers and sisters, if there is to be oneness of the saints, we cannot have hidden sins among us. If there are hidden sins among us, there will be hypocrisies and we cannot honestly talk about oneness.

### **Need to Deal with Our Flesh and Self**

We also need to deal with our flesh. You know that flesh likes to deal with flesh – my flesh like to deal with your flesh. But my flesh loves to protect myself the most. We all like to deal with the flesh of others but then mostly, we love to protect our own flesh. Galatians 5 tells us that the things of the flesh are easily manifested. There it mentions quite a few things that are all opposite to oneness. Strife, contentions, heresies and jealousies... are all conduct of the flesh. And wherever the flesh is, there it surely causes divisions. Thus, whenever there is division, we need to come before God to deal with our flesh. Do not first say to your brother, you have a speck in your eye and I have to remove it for you. But then you forget the beam in your eye which causes you to see poorly. Thus, we need to first deal with our flesh.

At the same time, you need to deal with your 'self'. The Lord said, if any man is to follow me, he needs to deny himself and takes up his cross and follow me. We need to solve the problem of our 'self'. *Jesus Christ is in the same equality as the Father. but He emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form, taking His place in the likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death on the cross.* (Philippians 2: 6 – 8).

Brothers and sisters, we all know talking about oneness is not an easy task. If you want the oneness, then you need to deal with the world in you, the hidden sins inside, your flesh and your old self. You are qualified to talk about oneness only when you are have dealt with them.

### **The Way to Oneness of the Saints**

On the positive side, what can we do to manifest the oneness that the Lord has given us?

## Hold Fast to the Head

Each of us needs to hold fast the head. Galatians 2: 19 said, not holding fast the head which is opposite to what we talked about. But let us use the positive way to read it which will go as follows: hold fast the head, from whom all the body, ministered and united together by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God. We have already mentioned that today the oneness has to be three dimensional and not one dimension. When people come to Matthew 18: 19: if two of you shall agree on the earth concerning any matter, whatsoever it may be that they shall ask, it shall come to them from my Father who is in the heavens. People then realize that in order to have their prayers answered, there should be at least two people praying in oneness of heart. Then let us come together and talk and compromise and agree. Now then we have agreed, let us pray together. But God still did not listen to the prayers. And then you are surprised why God did not answer your prayers according to His words. The reason is that you are going the wrong way. The oneness that God wants is not two dimensional. There is only one way for two people to be united in heart. And that is each one needs to be in oneness in heart with God. When each is in oneness in heart with God, then there will be real oneness in us. It is the same as having oneness in mind. The oneness in mind is not this member is in unity in mind with that member. We can talk and confer a lot, but that is not oneness in mind. We have to hold fast the head. Every member has to hold fast the head. Thus the bible said, where two or three gathered together in My name, I will be among them. 'In the Lord's name' means submit to the head. We submit to His power and His arrangements. When two or three of us gathered in the name of the Lord, and we yield to the head, and accept His authority and submit to Him, then at that time the Lord will be among us. This is the church and this is oneness. So, each of us have so much to learn in this matter. And that is why we need to offer up ourselves.

Romans 12: 1 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service.' What is consecration? Consecration is to offer up your body. You have your body; I have my body. I do my things in my body; you do your things in your body. Now, we both offer up our bodies; which means that from now on, we accept the Lord as our head. In the beginning, when you have not offered up your body, it was you who was the head. But one day when the love of God moves you, and you see the love of Christ, then you cannot just live for yourself anymore. And you said, 'My Lord, I offered up this body and let you be my head. Now you direct me and let your life be manifested from this body of mine'. This is holding onto the Head. Brothers and sisters, to practice oneness, we need to offer up our bodies; submit to the Head and be under Christ. This way, we will be brought into the oneness of the saints.



## **Let This Mind of Christ Be in You**

To practice oneness, we need to let the mind of Christ be in us. Do you know our own thoughts have direct relation on our daily living? If we follow the thoughts of our flesh, then we walk the way of the flesh. The result is death. If we are mindful of the thoughts of our spirit, then we walk the way of the spirit. The result will be life and peace. Thus, our mind needs to be renewed and be transformed. The renewal and transformation of our mind are based on our consecration. We offer up ourselves on the altar like a burnt offering. And offering once is not enough. The burnt offering is a lamb offered up once in the morning and once in the evening. There should always be offerings on the altar. And the fire on the altar should keep burning continually day and night. Our consecration is the same. We need to continually offer ourselves up on the altar and let the holy fire burn us to ashes to satisfy Him. When we do this, the Holy Spirit will renew and transform our thoughts. The things we value before, now we slight them. The things we slighted before, now we feel they are excellent. Paul said, 'But surely I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord' (Phil 3: 8). When you have this kind of renewal of thoughts, then naturally, you will let the mind of Christ be in you.

When Ephesians 4 talked about using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace, Ephesians 4: 2 said, 'with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love'. Lowliness is the willingness to stand on the basest position. There is no self in lowliness. Lowliness is not just thinking a little less of oneself. Rather, it is not thinking of yourself at all. What is meekness? Some people say meekness means easily teachable. One who can accept teachings from almost anyone. Long suffering means you can bear all brothers and sisters. And we need to bear one another in love. We bear ourselves in love so many times. Yet we are very strict to brothers and sisters. Under such circumstances, how can we talk about oneness? Thus to talk about oneness, we need to have the mind of Christ in us.

### **Using Diligence to Keep the Oneness the Holy Spirit Gave Us**

We need to use diligence to keep the heart of oneness that is given to us by the Holy Spirit. Thank and praise God. The oneness of the saints has already been given to us by the Holy Spirit. We are already one in the triune God. Now we need to use diligence to keep it. You cannot keep a thing that is not yours. And if the thing has no value, you do not need to use diligence to keep it. But if one thing that is very precious to you and it belongs to you, then you need to use diligence to keep it. Do you think the oneness of the saints very precious? If you feel the preciousness of the oneness of the saints, then why not use all diligence to keep it? Why forsake it just because of some people, matters or things? We would rather forsake the oneness that the Holy Spirit has given us and not try to diligently keep it just because of differences in our view of the faith,

in our experiences, in our opinions, in our characters, in our background, in our habits or even in the way we speak.

### **Attaining the Unity of the Faith**

In Ephesians 4, there are two verses concerning oneness. Ephesians 4: 3 said, 'Using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace'. And in Ephesians 4: 13 it said, 'Until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God'. Verse 3 said this oneness is the oneness in the Holy Spirit and has been given to us. We need to use diligence to keep it. And this points to the seven ones that were mentioned from verse 4 – 6: one body, one Spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. In another word, there is a oneness in the Godhead. Thus in the triune God, we already have this oneness. And verse 13 said we need to arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. We know the 'faith' mentioned here is not the same as the 'one faith' mentioned in Ephesians 4: 5. That 'one faith' points to the basic and foundational faith. That is, believing Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God. If you do not have that faith, you will not be in the house of God. The Chinese translation of 'the faith' in verse 13 is the same as 'the faith' in Jude 1: 3 'I have been obliged to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints'. This 'faith' encompasses all the truths in God including the truth in the word of God.

It is not only oneness in the knowledge of the faith, but we also need to be in oneness in the knowledge of the Son of God. This knowledge in the original language means the complete or full knowledge in our experience of the Son of God. In another word, you have a very personal and full experience of the knowledge of the Son. On one side, it is the full knowledge of the faith. And on the other side it is the complete knowledge of the personal experience of the Son of God. One day, we will have the oneness in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God. Your knowledge of the bible and my knowledge of the bible will be the same. Today, when we read the bible, we arrive at different views of the bible. But one day, we will arrive in the oneness in the knowledge of the faith. Today, each of our experience of the Son of God is different. Some experience certain aspects of the Son of God. Others experience more of other aspects of the Son of God. Some experience more of the Son of God. While some others experience less of the Son of God. But we thank the Lord! One day every one of us will abundantly experience the Son of God. What a glorious oneness it will be! We have not reached this oneness yet. But this is the right goal. And we all are going towards that goal.

The problem we have today is that we reverse the order. We want to start from the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to arrive at the oneness that the Holy Spirit has already given us. In fact, this two oneness is one matter; the two ends of one matter. You need to start with the oneness

that the Holy Spirit has given us. Then we can arrive at the oneness of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. But sadly, we have reversed the order.

I have always like to use the following example:

### **Know That There can be Different Interpretation**

One time, I was with an American couple in Peru in South America for almost two months. We used a small boat to go along the Amazon River and to stop at places to visit brothers and sisters. Sometimes we did cross mountains to visit brothers and sisters. Most of the places that we visited did not have roads. First, we needed to fly in, then took a gas propelled vessel along the Amazon.

The believers nearby where we visited wanted to hold a special conference the night before I was to leave Peru. A lot of the Christians from different places came and were getting ready to have a special conference. Earlier in the day, the brother who was in charge told me, 'Since you are leaving tomorrow, you should be the speaker of the conference tonight'. I said, 'I will'. A missionary from the next village came to have dinner with us before the conference. Before we had dinner, I had some fellowship with that missionary. He wanted to know my background. He knew I believed in the Lord, but he was not satisfied with me. He used different ways to test me on the interpretation of some of the passages in the bible. I knew his background and I knew he wanted to test me. So I tried not to go into too much detail to avoid serious problems. Eventually, he asked me, 'What is your interpretation regarding rapture?' I knew his answer to this. I said, 'I believe the entire church will be raptured'. This is not wrong. But then he was not satisfied. He continued, 'How many times will there be rapture? Once or twice? Before the tribulation or after the tribulation?' I could not lie. So I said, 'Brother, I believe the entire church will be raptured. But in my understanding, those who are prepared and ready will be raptured first and then the entire church'. He said, 'You do not believe the bible'. I said, 'Brother, this is my understanding as of today. One day, if the Lord shows me that it is not this way, I am willing to change'. He said again, 'You do not believe the bible'. After dinner, we both walked towards the conference ground. He was by my side and he said, 'If you speak tonight, then I will not speak at all'. He was a missionary in a nearby village. He and the brother in charge of this conference were coworkers. How could I be the one to cause difficulties between them just because I want to speak? So I told the brother in charge that I would not speak. And the missionary brother who questioned me was very satisfied. But then it caused some difficulties. The brothers who set up the conference asked me why I would not speak.

Today there is this same problem with us. When we meet a Christian, the first thing we ask is 'Do you believe in the Lord?' When he said yes, are you satisfied that he believed in God? The second question will be 'Which denomination do you belong to? How do you look at this truth? How do you look at spiritual experiences? Have you spoken in tongues?' Brothers and

sisters, once you ask all these questions, there will not be any more fellowship between the two of you. In another word, if there is no unity in our knowledge of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, then there will be no fellowship. Let me ask you, how can we work towards oneness if we are like this?

### **Arriving at Oneness Through Fellowship**

Today, this precious oneness has already been given us by the Holy Spirit. But today, there are still so many differences among God's people even in the area of the knowledge of the faith and the experiences of the Son of God. However, our oneness in the triune God is a fact. So let us stand on this ground to fellowship with all the saints. Fellowship is not based on interpretation or enlightenment. It is based on the life of Christ. We have one life of Christ, one Holy Spirit and one God and Father. We should accept each other, just like the Lord accepted us. We should fellowship on this ground with each other.

In Ephesians 4, you see how we can start from the oneness in the Holy Spirit so we can arrive in the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. The way to do it is through fellowship. In another word, even though we can have different views or interpretations or we have differences in our character, yet we should still learn how to fellowship with each other.

What is fellowship? What is the difference between fellowship and deliberation? Fellowship is sharing what we have in common. What is that we have in common? The Lord is what we have in common. You take what the Lord has done on you, together with what the Lord has enlightened you on faith and then you share those with brothers and sisters. One thing to learn is that when we fellowship, we should not insist on what we know. It should not be that today this is my interpretation of this passage of the bible and this is how you should interpret it. And if you do not agree with my interpretation, then please leave and we cannot fellowship. And not to say that today we have certain charismatic experiences which we are going to tell you and you have to have these experiences too. And your experience of the Holy Spirit has to be the same as mine. If I experience numbness all over my body, then you have to experience this numbness too. Otherwise, we cannot fellowship. Dear brothers and sisters, if we are like this how can we enter into oneness in the knowledge of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God?

Thank God! What the Lord has given us is not for one person but for the entire Church. So what enlightenment or knowledge that the Lord gave you, regardless of the knowledge or experience of the faith, you ought to share it. But after you fellowshiped, leave that in the hand of the Lord and let the Holy Spirit work on it. Do not be discouraged. If your brothers and sisters do not accept it, you need to bring it before the Lord and pray about it. Maybe the time has not arrived yet. If this truth is from the Lord, they will see it one day. As to you, when you hear fellowship that is different from your understanding or your experience, do not immediately say, 'I cannot accept what you say'. Brothers

and sisters, you need to be humble. You need to examine what the bible says. You need to come before the Lord and ask Him, 'Does what this brother said come from you? Do his experiences come from you? And if it is from you, I am willing to accept'. On the other hand, do not follow blindly what that brother said just because you want to please him. We need to go back to the Lord. If it is truly like that, then we can continue to fellowship. And when we fellowship over and over again, the Holy Spirit will work on us. And what is the result? It is not the faith you know or my interpretation of the bible. Rather, the Lord will lead us into His own interpretation of His words. Not just a little of my experience or a little of your experience put together and they are complete. Gradually, the Holy Spirit will lead us into the oneness in the knowledge of the Son of God. Then this oneness can be manifested.

### **Return to Spiritual Reality**

Lastly, there are some people who consider oneness of the saints will never be possible. They feel that this oneness is something that has been broken and so it can never be put back together again. There are others who insist that since the bible talks about oneness, then we must have oneness. They will use all kinds of human ways and methods to achieve oneness. But this way of achieving oneness causes more harm than good. Today, where is the way? Did our Lord give us a practical way to achieve this oneness? Brothers and sisters, I believe so. To practice oneness, we need to go back to God and to the Holy Spirit. We cannot manufacture oneness between each other. We cannot just focus on the outward oneness. Today, if we see that we are not one inwardly, but we feel that we should be one, then we should not just focus on the outward aspect. We cannot start on the outside with regards to the way of recovery of oneness. We need to put aside all the outward things for now. It is because from the word of God, anything with regards to the recovery of oneness has to do with spiritual reality. Let us have the oneness in spiritual reality. Let us fellowship in the life within us. Let us see and know the eternal purpose of God. Let us work with God. And dear brothers and sisters, if we can continue to walk in this path, then the testimony of oneness will be manifested.

### **Oneness of the Saints is the Standpoint of the Local Church**

If it is this way, do we just forsake the stand of the local fellowship? I love all brothers and sisters. I am so willing to fellowship with all brothers and sisters. So I go here and there so as to fellowship with all the saints. Is this oneness of the saints? Just like a butterfly, flying north and flying east so as to show I am one who wants the oneness of the saints.

What really is the standpoint of the local church? We believe the bible did mention about local church. But where is the teaching of the standpoint of the local church in the entire New Testament? In the New Testament, we cannot find the teaching of the local church. We only see the pattern of the local church – the church in Jerusalem, the church in Antioch, the church in Ephesus, the

church in Rome etc. You see the pattern but you do not see the teaching. The teaching in the bible is not on the standpoint of the local church, rather, it is on the oneness of the saints. If you start from the standpoint of a saint, then you can manifest the standpoint of the local church. If you start from locality, then you will see that the more you talk about locality, the more difference and split you will cause among the children of God. Anyone who can see the oneness of the saints, he only has one standpoint. And that standpoint is to testify for the Lord in the oneness of the saints. He cannot belong to the Catholics or any other divided denominations. He needs to stand in the position of the oneness of the saints to testify for the Lord. Today, it is not possible to recover the outward appearance of the local church. Unless you go to a place where no one has heard of the gospel. You go preach the gospel and people in that place got saved. Then you can say that is a local church because all the saved are from that one place. Apart from this situation, no matter where you go, you can see all different denominations with the children of God in every denomination. There are God's children in the Catholics, in the Greek Orthodox, in Protestant and in independent congregations. God's children are dispersed in different congregations. Local church means the church in a certain locality and it includes all the children of God in that locality. The brothers and sisters living in that locality are included. The brothers and the sisters in the Catholics are included. Even the brothers and sisters in Jehovah Witness are included. I am not saying Jehovah Witness is the faith; it is heresy. And I am not saying Catholics are correct. But if there are people who truly believe in the Lord, then they are your brothers and your sisters. They belong to that local church like you. Local church includes all God's children from that locality. No one can say, 'We are the local church'. If you said that, you drive out your brothers and sisters and you will lose the testimony of the local church. The testimony of the local church is the oneness of the saints. Is it because it is impossible to gather all of God's children together, we will then just give up on the testimony of the oneness of the saints? Brothers and sisters, you should be mindful of the heart of God. If you see that the heart of God is oneness of the saints, then you need to stand on the position of the oneness of the saints to testify for the Lord.

Thus today, our way is not just on the outward. Our way is the inward reality. Our way is not the things we do outwardly. Rather, it is the inward reality. To testify the oneness of the saints, we need to gather under the Head. We need to embrace all of God's children. We need to accept the different gifts given to the church of God, so that the Body of Christ can grow into maturity and into the full stature of Christ. Dear brothers and sisters, thank God! He has already given the oneness of the saints to us. You need to stand firm on the oneness and testify for Him!

#### **Prayer:**

Our Lord, You are the way. Please reveal to us what is the way to the oneness of the saints, so we can testify for You on earth. In Jesus name, Amen.