

**WCCC 1995**

**Brother Kaung**

**Brotherly Love (1)**

We thank the Lord that He gave us the chance to gather together before Him. Last time when we had our service meetings, we fellowshiped before the Lord on this matter of the oneness of the saints. We saw that the oneness of the saints is not only from God, it is also totally according to the oneness of the deity. Our Lord once prayed that we be one as He and the Father are one. The oneness between the Father and the Son is the oneness inside. It is in the Spirit. This oneness is totally in harmony and totally in one. The Lord asked us to be one with Him. Oneness is not something outside; it is inside and in the Spirit. It is in Christ that we are one. Today, by the Holy Spirit, we want to keep diligently the oneness in the Spirit, until one day we arrive at that oneness in the faith and the oneness in the knowledge of His Son so that our Lord will be satisfied.

This time, our gathering is according to our last gathering. Last time, we mentioned the oneness of the saints. This time we want to share on brotherly love. Brotherly love is not something by chance. It is not something that man can do. Brotherly love has its source. God is our source. This time, the Lord willing, we shall have four mornings to share. This morning, we shall talk about 'God is Love'. Tomorrow, we will share on 'Love Is the First Commandment'. Then we will talk about 'Love God'. Finally, it will be about 'Brotherly Love'. So let us turn to the Scripture.

*I John 4: 7 – 21. You are of God, children, and have overcome them, because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. They are of the world; for this reason they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God; he that knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another; because love is of God, and every one that loves has been begotten of God, and knows God. He that loves not has not known God; for God is love. Herein as to us has been manifested the love of God, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son a propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God has so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time: if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby we know that we abide in Him and He in us, that He has given to us*

*of His Spirit. And we have seen, and testify, that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and have believed the love which God has to us. God is love, and he that abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Herein has love been perfected with us that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, that even as He is, we also are in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, for fear has torment, and he that fears has not been made perfect in love. We love because He has first loved us. If anyone say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, that he that loves God loves also his brother.*

Let us bow down and have a word of prayer.

Lord, we really thank You and praise You, because Your word is so clear. Your word is with power. Lord, now that You have said so, You shall accomplish it Yourself. We look to You to take away any veil in us, so that Your word can become life and spirit in us, and Your purpose can be accomplished. We worship You. May all glory be to You. In the name of the Lord. Amen.

God is the greatest mystery in the universe. No one has ever seen God. God is far beyond our comprehension. Unless God reveals Himself, no one can truly know Him. We thank God, because, although He is the greatest mystery beyond what we can accept, He is pleased to reveal Himself to us. Sometimes, God reveals His purpose, so that we know His purpose. Sometimes, God reveals His way, so that we know how He works. We thank God, for He sometimes reveals Himself, so that we can truly know Him. Indeed, when God created man, He already put in him the concept of God. So, all men have some concepts about God, *'because that which is known about God is evident within them, for God made it evident to them.'* (Romans 1: 19). Although nobody has ever seen God, yet, through the creation, men can still see His power and deity. So, today, we understand the great power of God. Also, we have some understanding of the uniqueness of God, which is different from men's. However, although this is so, we are not really clear about who God is. We can say that, though we heard of Him, we have not seen Him. In the concepts of men, there is a lot of misunderstanding about God.

In the concepts of men, God is very fierce and punishing. This is because men have sin. Therefore, men try very hard to bribe to appease God. On the other hand, some think that God does not care. After He created the universe, He just let it grow by itself, as if He is a laissez-faire type of being. He does not

care, and He does not mind. So here we see that men really do not understand God.

But we thank God, for in His word, He constantly tries to reveal Himself. He loves for us to know Him. This is because He loves us so.

For example, Genesis 1: 1 says, 'In the beginning, God...' The word 'God', ('ELOHIM' in Greek), means that God is the supreme. Genesis 2: 4 calls Him JEHOVAH ELOHIM, indicating that He is ever-existing, the greatest, supreme God. In Genesis 17: 1, God told Abram that He is 'the Almighty God', meaning, in the original language, He is the all-sufficient God. In Exodus 3: 14, God said to Moses, 'I AM THAT I AM.' Moses asked God what he would say if, when he went back to His people in Egypt, he was asked the name of God. Then God said, 'I AM THAT I AM.' He is all. In Exodus 33, Moses asked God to let him see His glory. God said, 'No man can see Me and live. But, when I pass by you, you shall see My back.' So God put Moses in the cleft of the rock, and God's glory passed by. Then God proclaimed His name, saying, '*Jehovah, Jehovah God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth.*' (Exodus 34: 6). So, we see that God constantly wants to reveal Himself to men, so that men can know Him. Then, when we come to the Book of Leviticus, we see that He reveals Himself as the Holy God. God said to His people, 'Be holy, for I am holy', meaning that 'I am uncommon, therefore you cannot be common.' In the Book of Numbers, we see that our God is a jealous God. Then in the Book of Deuteronomy, we see that our God keeps His covenant. In the Book of Joshua, we see that God is the captain of the hosts of the Lord. In Judges, God shows us that He is the king of Israel. In the historical books, we see that the people of Israel perished because they had not honored the Lord as king. In the prophets, we are shown again and again that God is the Father. God is the Father of Israel; He also is the husband of Israel. He is their Savior and Redeemer.

So we see in the Old Testament days, God continually revealed Himself. He wants His people to know Him. We praise God when we come to the New Testament, for He sent His Son to the earth. The Son of God came to the earth not only to declare the Father, but also to show us what kind of father He is. John 1: 14 says, 'The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.' We know that God is light. When the light shines out, it is truth. We know that God is love. When the love is expressed, it is grace. So, when our Lord was on earth, He revealed and expressed what is in God Himself.

In the revelations of God, the greatest revelation is that God says He is love. So, this morning, I want to share on this: God is love.

The men of the world have no concept that God is love. They may believe that God is powerful. They may believe that God is righteous and holy. But they cannot believe that God is love. So, we see in the religions of the world, the concept of God is one of fear. They believe that God is there to punish them. Therefore, they try all kinds of means to bribe God to appease His anger. Even when we read the Old Testament, we might also have the same kind of concepts. We might think the God in the Old Testament times was severe and fierce. But when we come to the New Testament, we begin to see that God is truly a God of love. For, in the Old Testament days, when the Israelites wanted to come near God, there were hurdles after hurdles. They had to offer sacrifices. They had to come to God through the priests. Once a year, the High Priest could go behind the veil only when he brought with him the blood of the sacrifice and incense, as if their God was so fearful. So, we may have this wrong concept when we read the Old Testament.

But God is the same God in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. He is the same yesterday, today and forever more. Indeed, in the Old Testament, we can see that God created, because He loves. He loves His Son. He created all things for His Son to inherit. God created man also because of love. He wants to give man to His own Son to be His eternal companion. Even after man sinned, out of love, God prepared salvation for him. God made a covenant with man. He gave the law to the Israelites. Why did God give the law to men? Because He wants men to be like Him. Even in the Book of Malachi, we see that the argument between God and men concerns this matter of love. 'I have loved you, saith Jehovah; but ye say, Wherein has thou loved us?' (1: 2). So, we see, in the Old Testament, our God is still a God of love. Of course, when it comes to the New Testament, this fact is absolutely clear. For, 1 John 4: 9 tells us, 'Herein as to us has been manifested the love of God, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.' So, I hope that brothers and sisters have to be clear about one thing. The God in the Old Testament is the same God in the New Testament. He is love.

In the New Testament, there are two different Greek words for this word 'love'. I believe many brothers and sisters already knew this. One word is AGAPE, which is absolute love. It is this perfect God showing this perfect and everlasting love to those who are unworthy, so that those who are loved can also have a reverence and a godly love towards Him, can express a practical love towards others who receive the same love, and help those in the world to come to know this God of love. This AGAPE love is the love of God. In the New Testament, the other word used is PHILEO. This word means tender affection. But one interesting thing is: God has never told men to love Him with this PHILEO love. When He told men to love Him, He used the word AGAPE. How He loves (AGAPE) us, He asks us to love (AGAPE) in the same way. He never asks men to have just

some tender affection (PHILEO) towards Him. For His love to us is absolute. Therefore, He asks us to love Him with the same kind of love as He loves us.

I think all brothers and sisters know the story given in chapter 21 of the Gospel according to John. After our Lord was resurrected, His disciples were fishing one day at the Sea of Tiberias. The Lord appeared to them. Then, in the morning, the disciples had breakfast with the Lord there. The Lord asked Peter, 'Do you love me more than these?' The word He used was AGAPE, meaning: 'Do you love Me in an absolute way, more than these things?' What are 'these things'? These things refer to his companions, the fire that cooked the fish, or the bread and the fish. 'Do you love me more than these?' But, since Peter had learned the lesson, he dared not say that he absolutely loved the Lord. So, he answered, 'Lord, You know I love (PHILEO) you. I can only tell You that I have affection towards You.' The second time when the Lord asked Him, 'Do you love Me?', the Lord still used the word AGAPE. Peter knew himself too well; he could only say, 'Lord, I do have affection towards You.' So, the third time, the Lord used the word Peter used. 'Do you have affection towards Me?' Peter was grieved, for he could not say that he had this absolute love (AGAPE) toward the Lord. Although this was so, the Lord said to Peter, 'Feed My sheep.'

Brothers and sisters, do we have this AGAPE love? Do we have this absolute love? I think Peter had learned the lesson. But oftentimes, we have not learned the lesson. In fact, we do not have this love. When God created man, He made him according to His image. In His own image, the most important thing is love. When He created man, He gave him this instinct to love. He gave him a kind of love which would allow him to receive the love from God. This kind of love is not the love of God. It is only a shadow of the love of God. When God created man, He did not give him this God's love; for this love is not created. God creates many things. He makes things out of nothing. But love is God Himself; it cannot be created. It can only be born.

There are two different words. One is 'attributes', which refers to the characteristics belonging to Him alone. For example, the power of God is one of His attributes. His omniscience is another attribute of God. The other word is 'essence', the inner substance of God. It is He Himself. So, some are the attributes of God, and some others are the essence of God. The most important essence of God is love. God is love. This is God Himself. This cannot be separated from God, and this cannot be created. This can only be begotten. This is the main thing in the deity.

In the eternity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are in love with each other. This love is not an ineffectual thing, not something latent or dormant. It is not something that has to be attracted from outside. This is something from within; this is His life, and this is Himself. The Father loves His Son with an absolute love. The Son loves His Father, also with an absolute love. This love never fails in the deity. It is constantly in motion and in fellowship. This progresses in the spirit. We thank God. One day, God sent His Son to the earth. Through His Son, He begets this love in us. Therefore, the Bible tells us: love comes from God. Those who love are begotten of God and know God. Love is from God. God is the source of love. Outside of God, there is no such love.

So, dear brothers and sisters, we have to be very clear here. Love is born of God. If you are not born again, you do not have this kind of love in you. Indeed, you may have a love in you which came from creation, such as the parents love their children, and the children love their parents. We may have some affection towards God. But, in our natural life, there is no such absolute love. It is only when we repent and believe in the Lord, the Holy Spirit pours down the love of God in our hearts. Then this love enters into our hearts. So, in fact, when we say we believe God, we believe in His love. Only then do we know God.

Dear brothers and sisters, a true knowledge of God is to know love. When we have many concepts about God, we may have a lot of knowledge. We may even have some experiences. We may have experienced His power. We may also know His deeds. We even understand some of the principles of His work. Then we say we know God. But strictly speaking, to know God truly is to know His love. When we know love, then we know God. Only such knowledge is true knowledge.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have to admit that our knowledge of God is very shallow. Much of our knowledge of God is only superficial. After all, how much do we know the absolute love of God? To know God in love is the true knowing of God. The Bible says, ‘...not that we loved God, but that He loved us.’ God loves us. Why? For in us, there is not the kind of love to love Him. Romans chapter 5 tells us that, when we are yet enemies and when we are still sinners, dead in sin and transgression, God loved us and sent His Son a propitiation for our sins. Therefore, we see that it is not that we loved God, but God loved us. We thanked Him that He loved us first so that we now have this love in us. This love is God Himself. Then we can start to love God and to love our brothers.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, this morning there is this simple burden in me. I want you to realize that there is nothing in us that can enable us to love

God and to love our brothers. If we love God out of ourselves, or love our brothers out of ourselves, this is not what God wants. On the contrary, because of this, many undesirable things happen. First of all, we have to humble ourselves before the Lord, confessing that in us there is no love. We have to refuse this natural love in us and put it under the cross, so that we can let the love which God has begotten in us to love Him and to love our brothers. Only this is the pure love. We thank and praise God. Now that He has loved us, He has caused that love to be born in us. Now, we have a responsibility. We have to abide in this love. To abide in love is to abide in God. How do we know that our daily life is abiding in God? If we abide in His love, and take love to be our home, then we know we abide in Him. Then, how He was on earth, in the same manner, we shall be on this earth. We shall fear the judgment no more. For in love, there is no fear. Then we are completely one with our Lord, for we become one in love. So, I hope brothers and sisters pay particular attention to this.

Let us pray: Our God, we worship You, because You gave us Your only begotten Son. Not only were we born of You, we have also been given the essence of Your character in us. Lord, we beseech You that we may abide in love and not leave this love. In the days of our life, may we be able to love You and to love our brothers with this love, so that Your name may be glorified. In the name of our Lord, Jesus. Amen.