

WCCC 2005

Brother Kaung

The Way to the Eternal Purpose of God

- The Cross and the Church (2)

The Cross and the Building of the Church

Matthew 16: 18, 24 – 27. And I also, I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it.

The Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whosoever shall desire to save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it. For what does a man profit, if he should gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man is about to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will render to each according to his doings'.

Ephesians 4: 1 – 16. I, the prisoner in the Lord, exhort you therefore to walk worthy of your calling wherewith ye have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love; using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, as ye have been also called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all, and in us all. But to each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of the Christ. Wherefore He says, having ascended up on high, He has led captivity captive, and has given gifts to men. But that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same who has also ascended up above all the heavens, that He might fill all things; and He has given some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints; with a view to the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ; until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ; in order that we may be no longer babes, tossed and carried about by every wind of that teaching which is in the sleight of men, in unprincipled cunning with a view to systematized error; but, holding the truth in love, we may grow up to Him in all things, who is the Head, the Christ: from whom the whole body, fitted together, and connected

by every joint of supply, according to the working in its measure of each one part, works for itself the increase of the body to its self-building up in love.

Let us have a word of prayer:

Dear Lord, as we gather together in Thy presence, our hearts are full of gratitude. We want to thank Thee for being so faithful to us during the past few days. We thank Thee for bringing us to this last full day of the conference. Dear Lord, we want to offer this day into Your hands. We pray that Thy presence be with us. We pray that Thou will remove any veil that may still be upon our hearts. We pray that Thy word will really penetrate into the depths of our being and bring us into Thy eternal purpose. Dear Lord, we confess that without Thee we can do nothing, but with Thee all things are possible. We confess that we are an impossible people, but we thank Thee because this is what Thou are looking for. So dear Lord, we pray that even in this late hour Thou will bring us into the way of the cross that it may lead us into Thy eternal purpose. We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

We have been fellowshipping together on the theme of the way to the eternal purpose of God which is the cross. If we were able to look into the very heart of God, what do you think we would see there? I believe that in the very heart of God there is only one Person, and that is His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus. The heart of God is centered upon His Son. He loves His Son and He does everything for His Son.

But if you look into the heart of our Lord Jesus, what do you think you will find? You will find His church, His body. So according to the word of God, the whole Bible tells us these two things – Christ and His church. This is the eternal purpose of God. But the only way to know Christ and to know the church is through revelations. God has to reveal His Son in us, and the Son has to reveal the church to us. Without such revelation, our concept of Christ and our concept of the church are very, very inadequate. The only way to really know Christ and the church is to look to God to give us revelation. But receiving revelation from above is one thing; to know Christ and to know the church is one thing; but to really win Christ and live in the church, there is need for the cross. That is why our emphasis for this time is on the way to the eternal purpose of God – the cross. The cross gives us Christ, and the cross gives us the church.

We began on this matter of the cross and the foundation of the church. Our Lord Jesus said to Peter: 'You are Peter, a stone, a small stone. On this rock, massive rock I will build My church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it'. The foundation of the church, the rock is our Lord Jesus because there is no other foundation that we can lay but Christ Jesus. But even though our Lord Jesus was sent by the Father and He was sent with a mission, He would

not have been able to fulfill His mission if He had not gone to the cross. If He had come into this world and become a man and lived a perfect life for thirty-three and a half years – a life that really answered to God’s desire – and then ascended to heaven, then He would have failed in His mission. So far as He Himself is concerned, He would have been a success, but so far as His mission is concerned, He would have been a failure. But because of His amazing love for us, He was not thinking of Himself. Nothing could have been better for Him than if He had ascended from that Mount of Transfiguration, but for our sake He went to Calvary and died on the cross. So at the end of His crucifixion He shouted, ‘It is finished!’ The mission was accomplished. He had fulfilled His mission as the sent One.

We also mentioned that when the soldier thrust the spear into His side, out of His broken heart came out blood and water. Out of the cross of our Lord Jesus came the raw material for the building of the body of Christ, His church.

In Genesis 2, God said, ‘It is not good for man to be alone. I will make him a helpmate, his like’. But after God led all the living creatures to Adam, Adam could not find his like in all these living creatures. So God put him to sleep and then God opened his side and took something out of Adam. With that He built a woman. So when God led Eve to Adam, Adam immediately said, ‘This is me!’ And they were united into one. In the case of Adam, his surgery was painless because that was before sin entered into this world. But in the case of our Lord Jesus, when He was crucified on the cross, He went through the utmost sufferings because sin was in this world. Thank God, His blood is for the remission of our sins, and the water is His life given to us. And with this life the church is to be built.

The Foundation and the Building

Now we would like to consider together on this matter of the cross and the building of the church. We remember that after the Father revealed His Son to Simon Peter, after the revelation of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, our Lord Jesus continued to reveal to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and be killed, but on the third day He would be raised. In other words, the way to be Christ, to fulfill His mission as Christ, He must die on the cross. To our Lord Jesus the cross is a must. He is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. You cannot separate Christ from the cross or the cross from Christ. It is the cross that gives us Christ, but it is Christ who gives us the cross.

Then our Lord Jesus continued to say to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to follow Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me’. In other words, the cross is necessary for Christ Himself, and the cross is necessary for us to be built as His church. The raw material is here, but how can this raw material be built up together into the house of God? It is through the cross. Without the cross, the church cannot be built. So our Lord Jesus said, ‘You must deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me’.

Our Lord Jesus is the foundation of the church, but this foundation is different from the foundation that we see when we are building a physical house. Even though the foundation supports the house, the foundation and the house may be of different materials. But when our Lord Jesus said, 'I will build My church', He is building a spiritual house. He is building His own body. So we find that the relation between the foundation and the building is organic. In other words, the building is the out-growth of the foundation. It is the extension of Christ, so what is in the foundation is to be in the building. That is why the Scripture says that we must be rooted and built up in Him. Our Lord Jesus is the rock; He is the foundation.

A Tried and Precious Stone

In Isaiah 28: 16 it says, *'Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I lay for foundation in Zion a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that trusteth shall not make haste'*.

God said, *'I lay a foundation in Zion, and that foundation is a stone, a rock'*. But more than that, it is a tried stone; it has been tested and found perfect. That speaks of the life of our Lord on this earth, how He has been tested. He was tempted in all things, yet without sin. He is a solid rock. Not only that, He is a precious corner-stone. He is not only a tried stone, but He is a precious stone. And He is the sure foundation. Now if the foundation is of this manner, then the building must be of the same quality.

Changed From Dust to Stone

You remember the story of Simon Peter. In John 1 his brother Andrew led him to Jesus, and the Bible tells us that our Lord Jesus looked at him. The word look there means that He looked him up and down. He looked into his very being. Then the Lord said, 'You are Simon, Bar-Jona, but you shall be called Cephas, a stone'. Originally, Simon was a very outspoken person. Usually, he would speak before anyone else. He would even speak before Christ spoke. But strangely, when he was led to our Lord Jesus, he was speechless because when our Lord looked at him, looked into his very being, he could not say anything. And the Lord said, 'You are Simon'. Of course, he knew he was Simon. He did not need for the Lord to tell him he was Simon. But there is a meaning behind it. The Lord said, 'You are Simon. That is what you are naturally. You are born of your earthly parents, and you are given the name Simon. That is what you are originally, but you shall be called Peter'. In other words, the Lord said, 'I will do a work in your life. I will transform you from Simon to Peter'. Simon was a man of dust because naturally we are made of dust. But our Lord Jesus said, 'You will be a stone'.

When we come to the Lord Jesus, when we believe in the Lord Jesus, a new element enters into our life and changes us from dust to stone. So when Simon confessed the Lord Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, our Lord Jesus

said, 'You are Peter. Now you are a stone, you are now a living stone'. Peter understood it because in 1Peter 2, he said when we come to the Lord Jesus, we all become living stones to be built up into a spiritual house. We are stones but rough stones. We know Peter was a rough stone, and for that stone to be built into that spiritual house, it had to be tested. It had to be disciplined. It had to undergo suffering in order it may become a tried stone and a precious stone.

That is why you find that after our Lord Jesus called Peter to be His disciple, during those three years and so, our Lord Jesus worked in the life of Simon Peter. Oftentimes, the Simon in Peter rose up. As a matter of fact, immediately after the Lord said you are Peter, this man said to the Lord Jesus, 'Do not go to the cross'. The Lord said, 'I will go to the cross'. But Peter said, 'No, be good to yourself'.

This is natural love and the natural mind. The natural mind does not want to suffer. And our Lord Jesus had to turn around and say, 'Get behind Me, Satan'. Here you find Satan had a foothold in this man Simon Peter.

The Lord Dealt with Peter

After we believed in the Lord Jesus, thank God we are living stones. There is a new life in us. All the potentials are there. But unfortunately, we find that our old life is still there. Our old nature is still there. Our self, our flesh is still there. Within us there is a treasure, but outside of the treasure, there is still an earthen vessel. Oftentimes, we find what comes out of us is not Christ in us; it is our old self, and this cannot be built into the church.

During those years when Peter followed the Lord Jesus, he was dealt with by the Lord many, many times because he was an impetuous person. He was very outspoken. Among the disciples, he was the one who was dealt with the most. Sometimes I sympathized him. Peter, if you would only shut your mouth, how good it will be. But that is human wisdom because if he had not opened his mouth, he would not have had the opportunity to be tried and to be purified. Again and again, the Simon in Peter came out and our Lord had to cut him off.

You remember on the Mount of Transfiguration Peter said, 'It is good to be here. Let us make three tabernacles, one for You, one for Moses and one for Elijah. And we will just stay in the open air because it is so good here'. The Bible said he did not know what he was saying. But he felt that he had to say something so that Elijah and Moses would not disappear. And the heavenly Father had to shut him off.

Again, when the tax collector came to collect the temple tax, he said, 'Does your Master pay temple tax?' Without consulting our Lord, Peter said, 'Yes'. After he promised that, then he went to the Lord. So the Lord said to him, 'Who is going to pay the tax? Will the Son pay the tax?' But our Lord Jesus rescued him. He told Peter to go fishing. 'In the first fish that comes to the hook, there

will be the money for you and for Me'. But I think Peter would be very impatient having to just hook one fish. The Lord dealt with him.

Again, you find Peter came to the Lord and said, 'My brother sinned against me, and seven times I forgave him. Will that be enough?' Now he was trying to get praise from our Lord. For a man like Peter to endure for seven times was a miracle. And who was that brother? Andrew. What kind of a person was Andrew? Andrew was a quiet person, a very careful person. He noticed very small things. Among thousands of people, he could see a little boy who had two fish and five loaves. Now this kind of person is a careful person; probably he would rarely offend anyone. But oftentimes that is true. The one who thinks he is offended is the one who offends. So our Lord Jesus said, 'Not seven times, but seventy times seven.' That is impossible. To Simon this was impossible; this was death. But that was what the Lord wanted to do with him.

Peter was so self-confident. He loved the Lord. He really loved the Lord. So he told the Lord, 'If all the others flee I am willing to go and die with you.' And our Lord Jesus said, 'Simon, Simon, Satan has asked for you. He wants to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you. When you are restored, revive your brethren.' He was so sure of his love, but he denied the Lord three times. He came to his end. He wept. And thank God, he was restored by the Lord.

Even though Peter was a living stone, he was such a rough stone, full of his own self. And our Lord Jesus had to deal with him – deal with him in love, deal with him with patience until Peter became a precious stone. So you find in New Jerusalem there are twelve foundations of twelve precious stones, and the first stone is jasper. Probably this refers to Peter. And we find that when you see God, He looks like jasper.

So, this stone has to be tried. This stone has to be changed into precious stone, and then it can be built into that spiritual house. All the processes, painful as they may be (because so far as the flesh is concerned, it is painful), are all positive towards the purpose of God.

The Cross is a Must to the Church

After Peter had been dealt with, in 1Peter 1: 6 – 7, he wrote: *'Wherein ye exult, for a little while at present, if needed, put to grief by various trials, that the proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold which perishes, though it be proved by fire, be found to praise and glory and honor in the revelation of Jesus Christ.'*

Again, in 1Peter 4: 12 – 13: *'Beloved, take not as strange the fire of persecution which has taken place amongst you for your trial, as if a strange thing was happening to you; but as ye have shared in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, that in the revelation of His glory also ye may rejoice with exultation.'*

What happened in the life of Peter happens to every one of us because our Lord wants us to be built into His church. So He has to do all these works in

our lives. If we refuse then we will be unfit in the house of God. So the cross is a must to the church. The reason why the church is not built as it should be is because God's people try to avoid the cross.

Now our Lord Jesus said, 'If anyone desires to follow Me, this is his path, this is his way.' It is the way of the cross. 'If anyone desires to follow Me,' the Lord said, 'he must deny himself, take up the cross and follow Me.' The cross is something that we must take up but the cross is also something that we can avoid. You can take it up or you can by-pass it.

What is a cross? A cross is when God's will and your will cross each other. If you insist on having your way, you escape the cross, but you lose your soul. If for the sake of Christ and His gospel you are willing to let yourself die and let the will of God go through you, then you win your soul. So here you find, we must take our cross.

Consecration

How can we take up our cross? It is something that seems to be opposite to us; something that is killing us; something that is reducing us; something that is breaking us. Naturally speaking, we will never be able to take up our cross. We can be as brave as Peter and say, 'I am willing to die for You.' But to say it is one thing; to do it is another thing. We cannot do it. So the secret is here. The Lord said, 'Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me.' If we do not deny ourselves, it is impossible to take up the cross. So our problem is that we fail to deny ourselves, and this has something to do with consecration.

Romans 12: 1 says, '*Therefore beloved, I beseech you by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, which is your reasonable service, spiritual worship.*' That is the very basis of our Christian life. After we believe in the Lord Jesus, if we want to follow the Lord, the first thing we must do is to present our body as a living sacrifice. The reason why it uses the word bodies is because its emphasis is on our physical, daily living. It actually includes our whole being. We need to present our whole being as a living sacrifice to our Lord. And when we are doing that, this is denying ourselves.

We want to live for ourselves. We want to hold on to our rights. But when you 'present your bodies a living sacrifice,' it means that you let go of yourself. It means you are willing to give up all your rights. It means that you are willing to let Christ be the Lord over your life. You want His will be done. That is consecration.

Consecration is not trying to do something for God. That will follow. But consecration is giving up yourself to the Lord. It is denying yourself. I do not know myself anymore. Whenever I rises up, I say, 'I do not know you because I have been crucified with Christ. It is no long I who live; it is Christ who lives in me. He has every right over me. His will be done, not mine.'

Consecration is not just once for all. It has to have a beginning. One day you have to be moved, constrained by the love of Christ. You are willing to give yourself up to Him and allow Him to work out His purpose. Then daily, as the burnt offering is repeated morning and evening and is being added when there are festivals, when you are under testing, when the cross is before you, you have to decide whether you will take it or you will escape it. Only by rededicating, giving your life to the Lord, are you able to take up the cross and follow the Lord. Many times, there are struggles, but finally His love overcomes, and you are willing to let go yourself. That is consecration. Consecration is a way. It goes in the way of the cross. You find that the cross is a must to us.

The Cross Works Corporately

But there is more to it because God's purpose is not just to make you a model, or a monument. This is not God's purpose. God's purpose is not just to make you a spiritual giant, to be admired by people as a monument standing there. God wants a body; He wants a house. Therefore, all these living stones have to be built together. There is not only the work that needs to be done to each stone, turning the raw material into useful material, but afterwards, you need to fit them together, build them together according to the design of God. So there is much more working of the cross needed.

In the Old Testament times, God led His people out of Egypt. He brought them to Mount Sinai, and there He shared His heart with them. Why did God deliver them? What was the reason behind it? God said, 'I want to dwell among you. Build Me a sanctuary that I may dwell in your midst.'

And when God told the people to build Him a sanctuary, He showed Moses the design. But where were the materials? He called the people to offer heave offerings. We know that the children of Israel were slaves in Egypt. They owned no property. They did not even own their own lives. But when God delivered them out of Egypt, He made them the richest people in the world. They spoiled all the riches of Egypt. So they carried all the riches of Egypt out with them. Then God said, 'Give Me a heave offering. Out of what I have given you, you give back to Me out of love.' Legally speaking, all these riches were God's, but God would rather that His people would give willingly and lovingly.

So they began to give – gold, silver, iron, brass, purple and scarlet linens, acacia wood, precious stones, oil and other things. Now all these things actually came from God, but out of the abundance, they gave willingly to God. Now that is a figure of consecration. But in the New Testament, after our Lord Jesus has come, He brings us to the very origin and that is to present our bodies a living sacrifice. The redeemed belong to the Lord. So it is but right for us to do it – not just silver and gold, but yourself.

After all these materials were given, much work had to be done. All the wood had to be cut; all the cloth had to be woven; all the gold had to be beaten.

Everything had to be done so that it would take form. And you find all the furniture in the tabernacle.

The same thing is true with Solomon's temple. David prepared much material for the house of God. Out of his affection for the Lord, he gave to the Lord. He gave according to all his power. And everyone whose heart was touched gave. And then the workmen had to come and work on these things. Not only does the Lord have to do much work in us individually, but in putting us together, there is much more work to be done. The cross must work in us individually, and the cross has to work among us corporately.

A Revelation of the Church

That leads us to Ephesians 4. We know that the letter to the Ephesians is concerned with the eternal purpose of God, especially in this matter of the church. In its first three chapters, maybe we can say that it is a revelation of the church, how the church is the body of Christ. In Ephesians 1: 22 – 23 it says, '*Christ is head to the church which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all and in all.*' And the church is the new man – neither Jew nor Gentile because God has brought them into one new man. The church is the house of God, the foundation and the cornerstone. The twelve apostles are the foundations and Christ is the cornerstone. And it is the household of God. We find that the first three chapters tell us what the church is, revelation. And in the last three chapters, we find the practical working out.

Prisoner of the Lord

When there is revelation, we find the heading of that letter is: 'Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ.' As an apostle, he passed on the revelation that he had received. But then when it comes to the building of the church from chapters 4 – 6, he said, 'I, prisoner of the Lord, I am a prisoner of the Lord.' For the house to be built, we need to stand on the ground as the prisoner of the Lord. We are the captivity captive. We were once being captured by the enemies. We were in captivity, but our Lord Jesus captured us. So we are His prisoners. We are prisoners of the Lord. That is our position. Unless we take our position as prisoners of the Lord, there is no way to build the church, because a prisoner is one who has no freedom. He cannot do what he wants to do. He cannot go where he wants to go. He has lost his freedom. He is under someone. And unless we take that position, there is no way to build a church. Are we willing to take that rightful place?

Then the apostle Paul, the prisoner in the Lord, said in Ephesians 4: 1, 'I, the prisoner in the Lord, exhort you therefore to walk worthy of the calling wherewith you have been called.' Thank God, we have been called. What is our calling? The calling here does not refer to our individual calling. It is an overall calling. All of us are called. We are all called into this. What is that calling according to Ephesians? That calling is that we are called to be the body of Christ. What a

calling that is! It is a holy calling, an on-high calling. It is a heavenly calling. We are called to be the body of Christ. All the fulness of the head dwells in the body. All the riches of Christ dwell in the body, and the glory of Christ is manifested through that body. It is one with Him. As the head is, so is the body. We are called to be the body of Christ. Since this is our calling, we should walk worthy of our calling. Are we walking worthy of our calling?

Walk Worthy of Our Calling

Meek and Lowly

How can we walk worthy of our calling? *'With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love'* (Ephesians 4: 2). These are the qualities, the character of our Lord Jesus because He is meek and lowly in heart. He calls us to yoke with Him, to learn of Him because He is meek and lowly in heart. There is no resistance in Him towards His Father. That is meekness. He is lowly in heart, and that lowliness means there is no self in Him. That is what Christ is, and that is what we should be. It is His life in us. It is His character in us. With that kind of attitude, we are able to be built together. How resistant we are to God! The Bible says that Moses was the meekest of men. Now that does not seem to be right because even all the artists when they drew the picture of Moses, He was so majestic, so strong and powerful. Yet the Bible says he is the meekest of men. Why? It is because there was no resistance in him towards God. There was absolute submission, absolute obedience.

How about us? Is there still resistance in us towards God? Are we ready at all times to obey? Are we lowly in heart, selfless, willing to take the lowest place because that is what we are?'

Longsuffering

Then it says, *'With longsuffering.'* It means to suffer long. Now, do you expect that? To be built into the body of Christ means longsuffering.

Bearing With One Another

Then it says, *'Bearing with one another in love.'* All of these are the qualities of Christ. Only when we are standing in Christ are we able to begin to be built up together.

The Unity of the Spirit

And the first thing is: *'Using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.'* Why? It is because the body is one. As the head is one, the body is one. Therefore, we have to diligently keep the unity of the Spirit.

What is the unity of the Spirit? That unity has already been given. It has been given to all of us, so what we need is to keep it, diligently keep it because it

is so precious. You can easily lose it. Now what is the unity of the Spirit that has already been given to us? It is the seven 'ones' that follow.

'There is one body and one Spirit, as ye have been also called in one hope of your calling' (v. 4). The first three relate to God the Spirit because in one Spirit, that is in one Holy Spirit, we have been baptized into one body. And we all drink of one Spirit. So we have been baptized by the Holy Spirit, in the Holy Spirit, into one body. I think this is evident. As soon as you believe in the Lord Jesus, immediately you find there is not only a bond between you and God, you find there is a bond between you and all the other children of God, because we belong to each other. We are one body, and we drink of one Spirit. The same Holy Spirit dwells in us, and teaches us and brings us to Christ.

What is the hope of our calling? What is that hope? What is the hope of the body? The hope of the body is that the body be fully matured and become the bride of the Lamb. This is our blessed hope. And we have all these three.

Then it says, *'One Lord, one faith, one baptism'* (v. 5). That relates to God the Son. Our Lord Jesus Christ is our Lord. He is Lord to every one of us. And it is one faith. That one faith means we believe He is the Christ, the Son of the living God because that is the faith that saves us. 'One baptism.' It is not the manner of baptism; it is the meaning of baptism. We have all been baptized into one body. We belong to Christ. All of us belong to Christ.

Then, God the Father – *'One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in us all'* (v. 6). We have the same Father.

So where is the unity of the Spirit? The unity of the Spirit is in the triune God. In the world we have all differences and distinctions but in God we are one. In our Lord Jesus, we are one. In the Holy Spirit, we are one. Let us diligently keep that unity. Do not allow anything to come in and break that unity, whether it is national distinctions because there is neither Jew nor Gentile; whether it is cultural difference, the civilized or the barbarians; whether it is social difference, the bondman or the freeman. In Christ Jesus, in the Holy Spirit, in God the Father, we are one, and let this oneness surpass all differences.

We may have different ideas, we may have different interpretations of the word of God, we may have different experiences of the Son of God, but all these are secondary. The foundation is the unity of the Spirit. So let us continue to fellowship with one another. Oftentimes when we have differences, we are divided. We do not belong to one another, and we even become enemies to one another. Brothers and sisters, the cross must work in each one of us, cross out anything that will conflict with the unity of the Spirit. In spite of all the differences, let us be one. Let us continue to fellowship with one another. And through fellowship, one day we will arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.

Unity of the Faith

The unity of the faith is different from 'one faith' in verse 5. 'One faith' refers to the basic faith, the faith that saves us. *The* faith refers to the whole truth of God, the faith that is once delivered to us. Today we may have different understanding, interpretation of our faith, but if we are willing to continue to fellowship with one another, not isolate one another, if we are willing to be humble and open to one another, the Lord will lead us into the unity of the faith.

Knowledge of the Son of God

The same thing is true with the knowledge of the Son of God. This refers to the experiential knowledge of the Son of God. We will experience Christ together. What you experience of Christ will help me and what I experience of Christ will help you. Then we will grow up until we come to the full measure of the stature of Christ, and that is the time when the Bridegroom will come to take His bride.

So there is much work of the cross in us corporately. Are we willing to humble ourselves, not only before God, but before one another? As it says in Philippians, 'Each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves.' The cross is a must in the building of the church.

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee because Thou know what we need most. Thou know that we need to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Thee. Thou know that we need to bear one another's cross. So Lord, we look to Thee for grace, knowing that Thy grace is sufficient for us. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.