

Ephesians 1: 12 – 23

To the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. There are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 4: 20 – 22

But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit.

Colossians 2: 6 – 8, 19

Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty

deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

And not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

I John 2: 24 – 27

As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

We thank the Lord that the brothers asked me to share with brothers and sisters on the topic of ‘Christ is the Head of the Church’. If Christ is not the Head of the Church, whether that church can be called the Church is a question. We thank our Lord. From the bible verses that we read last time and those we just read today, we see that God has an eternal will. God wants to manifest through His Son that He is the Lord of all and He is also the Lord of redemption. If we say our Lord is the Lord of all, then all things came into being through Him; all things are dependent on Him and all things are for Him. If He is the Lord of redemption, then it is talking about us who have gone astray from God. Through ‘the Word became flesh’, He accomplished the work of redemption on the cross. His resurrection from the dead demonstrated who He is and what He has done. He ended the insolence of darkness and delivered us who are dead in sins and transgressions. Thus looking from either point of view, whether Christ is the origin of all things or that Christ is the Savior, there is no doubt that God has already destined His Son to be Lord above all and Head of all things.

We thank the Lord because when God manifested His glorious will, He demonstrated simultaneously how He brought all those who had gone astray and the fallen universe back before Him. This is what is mentioned in the first chapter of Ephesians. Through the grace of redemption of His Son, God has chosen a group of people from the earth. These people are called ‘the first to hope in Christ’ in Ephesians. They are called the body of Christ and this of course is the church.

The church as the ones who are ‘the first to hope in Christ’ implies that God is going to work His

counseled will on the church first. And the church is to expand her influence to all things and to bring all things back to God. We thank our Lord because the matter of Christ is the Head of the church will surely be accomplished since God has so arranged. If the church does not let Christ be the Head, then the church will not be able to accomplish what God wants to do. If the church cannot accomplish what God wants to do, then this matter of all things being summed up in Christ will not be realized.

We thank our God. He has revealed to us the administration, direction and the principle of His entire plan without any reservations. When it comes to us, what should we pay attention to? We should pay attention to how we can corporately and practically live out God's set pattern; to live out with Christ as the Head of the church. We thank the Lord because this matter of Christ is the Head in terms of position is not a question anymore. God has already revealed this fact and from all His creation, can you say Christ is not the Head of the church? You have enjoyed the reality of His salvation; can you deny that He is the Head of the church? Of course, to those who do not know God, they will not have to deal with this problem. But to us who are 'the first to hope in Christ', we cannot find any reasons to say our Lord is not worthy to be the Head.

The Path That God Leads Us to Walk On

We thank our Lord; when we have been thus enlightened, then God has already brought us into the knowledge of this path. God let us clearly see that when we can manifest in reality Christ is the Head, then God's work can start in us. Not only is there a beginning then but there is a growth, and not only growth but there is the end.

When we can see the direction that we should go, the purpose and the content, then we need to fervently ask God to give us a desire to live in His arrangement. If brothers and sisters are a little enlightened by God on this point, not only will we pay attention to how God is leading us forward, but we will be able to clearly see the completion of the glorious will of God. But we cannot ignore one thing. When we are thus going forward in God's heart, I surely wish that all of God's children will have a keen sense that the matter of letting Christ be the Head is a very serious spiritual warfare. If we ignore this point, we can only advance a little bit and we will not be able to go on anymore. This is because we will soon realize that there is a very strong opposition to this matter; and then we will wonder why there is reluctance in us to proceed. Whether it is because of circumstances or of our own unwillingness, if we are really to live out Christ is the Head, we definitely will encounter a very fierce spiritual warfare. This is because when God leads us to go

forward this way, His enemy clearly knows that if God succeeds, then it will be the end of him. Thus the enemy is absolutely unwilling to let the children walk in the path in which Christ is the Head.

We thank and praise our Lord. Even though Satan uses all kinds of attacks, oppositions and hindrances, yet in the end he will still fail. We thank our Lord because Christ is the Head comes at a great cost. We already mentioned that Christ is the origin of all things, and from the history of redemption, no one can repudiate the position that Christ is the Head. But until today, Satan is still not willing. If we read the word of God carefully, what are recorded in the bible? If we look at it from the negative side, the entire bible records how Satan opposes God. But we thank God. Satan can use all his strength to go against God, but the position of the Lord and the position of God cannot be moved. Even though Satan cannot move the position of God, yet he is not willing. Thus Satan continues to make disruptions. I do not want to say too much. We can understand more clearly if we look at some examples in the church history. The church has been on this earth for about two thousand years. Time wise, this period is neither too short nor too long. During this time, Satan has used many different ways to oppose God. All the ways that Satan uses revolve around one principle. I just want to simply mention it. Satan's way is to lure man to use other things to substitute God; whether it is man, thing or matter; as long as it can be used to substitute God. At one time or another, Satan has even used those so called churches under the name of Christ to substitute God.

The History of The Church as a Lesson

I would like to mention a few more significant examples. Brothers and sisters know that the church has been developing since the time of the apostles. From the church history, we can see that the church started to change not long after it started. Looking at the outside, you cannot find the true nature of what a church should be even at a very early time. But if you look at it from the point of the church being a religious and active organization, one will find this so called church that worshipped Christ has made much progress. Even though we cannot look into the details, but you all know that Roman Catholicism appeared after the first century. And the Roman Catholics controlled almost all of Europe and its surrounding places at that time. So from the outward appearance, was the church decaying or was it growing? From the outside, it was very magnificent. Even the kings had to follow the church and worship God. Brothers and sisters, in our heart we can understand that the emerging of Catholicism changed the color of salvation. And if you went to the

church to find Christ at that time, was Christ really there? You could not see Christ. All you could find were lots of other things which were not Christ. If you try to find salvation, you could not find it. They told you that if you want to be reconciled to God, you have to do seven holy things. If you did all these things well, then it would be alright. If you did not do those seven things right, then you have to go to purgatory. What are these seven things? They are baptism; confirmation; attend mass; confession to a priest; blessings of a priest at the wedding; the last rites before death. I forgot the last one.

Brothers and sisters, if you do these seven things, do you think you can find the way to return to God's presence? No, you still cannot come into the presence of God. If you look back at the church in the previous centuries and even today, people still insist they are the orthodox and others are not. Last century, there was a movement where they called the prodigal sons and also the unorthodox Christians to return home. But was that really a home? It was not a home. Why was it not a home? Did we find Christ there if we return? Was Christ there leading us forward? If you consider this point, then you will immediately know the answer. Do you want to listen to Christ or do you want to listen to the pope. Brothers and sisters, we can now see that the whole thing is corrupt. Man can make the situation that bad. We know behind that, it is the work of Satan. But we thank the Lord. God only allows man to be foolish up to a certain point and then He will, in His mercy, deliver man from the foolishness. Thus, we know that in the fifteenth century, there came the Reformation. Personally, and I think it is the feeling of some of the brothers here; I do not look at it as a reformation of the religion. First, it was not a question of religion. Second, the content was not really a reformation. Rather, it was God revealing His own work, bringing back before Him those who were willing to seek Him. And those who had a heart to seek God found the way back to His presence. That is why we said it was a recovery and an awakening of the church by God and not a religious reformation.

So is Satan defeated then? If we really look at the matter of Christ is the Head of the church, then that was only the beginning of the recovery of the church. What was the first thing that the church needed to recover from? No longer should man worship Mary but should worship Christ. But that was still not really accurate. And why is it not accurate? When we return again to look at the original arrangement for the church, we need to see that whenever Christ is not the Head of the church, then that church is not really one that follows the Lord. Of course we thank our Lord that God actually worked on the church at that time. He worked step by step. When God started to work on us because the position of Christ was changed and the truth of Christ was lost, we are

foolish and we will not allow God to change us. So we cannot expect God to change everything from an inaccurate position to a perfect position in an instant. We are very foolish and when we fell into error we do not realize it. And when God wants to deliver us out of imperfection, we are not willing. Thus when God wants to restore the church, He could only lead His children forward step by step. So brothers and sisters, when we read the church history during the time of the recovery of the church, we see that there were quite a few people used by God. Among the well known ones was Martin Luther. There was also John Huss about a century before Martin Luther. And among the contemporaries of Martin Luther were Calvin, Zwingli and other brothers. Thank God that He raised up these people to restore the church one step at a time. Regrettably, when they moved forward, even though they did some things right, yet they also did some things wrong. The result was that the brothers could not get along together. And when brothers could not work together and be one, it becomes a serious matter. If they could not work together but became at odds with each other, this really is something not good.

I was young when I first believed in the Lord. I did not know much about what believing in the Lord meant. I did not really understand what it means to be saved. Later, little by little, I knew that believing Christ and being saved is not just about going to heaven and not to hell. This was a step forward. But in fact this is not really an improvement, because I was still not clear on things about our Lord. It seemed that I knew just a little bit. When I was in high school, the youth fellowship in the church held a debate. And what was the topic of the debate? The topic was: is salvation by faith or by works? It seemed that each side had its reasoning from the bible. We debated, each side quoting bible verses to support their point of view. But we did not really know the bible at that time. One side said the bible clearly said one is saved by faith. The other side would say it was justified by works. We did not know the truth. Finally we asked the pastor and his answer was he did not know. This was our condition at that time. From around the sixteenth century till the discussion time, it had been quite a few hundred years. And yet we were still so confused. Brothers and sisters, what did that say? It said that we are far from the matter of Christ is the Head of the church. Thank the Lord; nowadays the children of God are not that confused. But that does not mean there is no misunderstanding in the matter of Christ is the Head of the church. Satan uses every way that he can think of to hinder God's children from returning back to the accurate position.

Theology

Why did I mention the debate that I had when I was young? It is because in recent years, especially in China, we notice God has many works of restoration in unusual circumstances. When China opened up, many things and works have moved into China. The work of Christianity and the gospel and many doctrines also moved into China. And today, they again debated the question that was debated when I was young. Some said salvation is by faith, and once saved, you are saved forever. Some said salvation is by faith but that salvation is not a guarantee. If one does not walk right, one can still go back to being unsaved. We wonder why they are still debating this question after hundreds of years. I can only say it is because we do not truly see the fact that Christ is the Head of the church. And that is why each has his own ideas and stand. I will not yield to you and you will not yield to me.

This is not a matter of yielding to another's point of view. So how are we to solve this problem when we come across it? The accurate answer is God's word; we need to go back into the presence of God. But men's foolishness has given the tool for Satan to cause disruptions. One group will call you a Calvinist. Another group will say another thing. This condition shows that there is a very serious spiritual problem. And the seriousness is this. Who are we to follow? Are we to follow our Lord or are we to follow those whom the Lord uses? We thank God that He has raised up many servants for His work. But one thing we need to remember, the servants whom God uses should preach God and should not preach their own opinions and explanations. A lot of people criticize our way of pursuing God and said it is anti-theology. To some this does sound like we are against theology. But we need to ask, what is theology? Throughout the church history, the idea that to serve God one needs to study theology has persisted. If you do not study theology, how can you serve God? There may be some reasons to it but it is not a necessity. Theology speaks of the things of God, how can we be against theology? We are not against theology. So what are we against? Or we should say what is it that we cannot accept in its entirety? Then we need to see what the present day theology is.

Theology is the study of the questions in the bible; to propose an explanation and to set standards. Some said if we are to follow and serve the Lord, we have to be under the guidance of theology. Personally, I cannot accept this. My understanding is that I look at what the words of God said and not how theology explains it. How should I choose if theology differs from how the word of God explains certain things? Does the explanation of theology really convince me? I cannot but consider what the word of God say. If that is not what God's words mean, how can I accept what

theology says? If you take theology as the basis of our faith, can I accept that? As far as I am concerned, I cannot because this is not what the word of God says. I cannot accept men's explanation and use them as our basis to believe, follow and seek our Lord. When we said that Christ is the Head of the church, it gives us a very clear boundary that we should not cross. Present day theology said the makeup of man is just a man. There is no differentiation of the spirit, soul and body. Decades ago, the interpretation of this matter was different. Theology said man was made up of spirit-soul and body. The spirit and soul was just one, not separated. And how about the explanation they had earlier than that? It said man was made up of spirit, soul and body. Thus, the explanation of theology changed from three parts to two parts to one. We need to pay attention to what the word of God said. We thank the Lord, whenever we return to the word of God; whenever we hold fast that Christ is the Head of the church; then all things are according to Christ. Whatever Jesus Christ said, we must follow; what our Lord has not said, we can use only as reference but we cannot follow.

Lightning From the East Heresy

Brothers and sisters, it is a spiritual war whenever we insist in living the reality of the matter of Christ is the Head of the church. We need to know clearly who the Lord is. We cannot choose anything outside of our Lord. I will not talk more on this. But in order to encourage brothers and sisters to stand firm on the principles of God, I am now going to talk about some negative disturbance that can easily grasp the heart and mind of God's children.

Recently I received news from a sister saying that a matter has started spreading in the northern states. It has spread very quickly and their writings are prolific. Whether they are effective or not, I do not know. So what is this? In recent years there is a heresy that started in China. They call themselves 'Lightning in the East'. It is hard to discern whether they are true or false if I just tell you what I know. So I am going to tell you what they said. They started a website in North America. They put a lot of information on the website. Some of the information introduces them. Some are the truth of their belief. I will just choose a little bit to read to you. Then I will ask you a question; how are you going to discern whether it is true or false.

This is from their own introduction on their background on the website. In 1991, a sister in their church was moved by the Holy Spirit to speak and to testify to the name of God and the coming of Christ. Everyone was very excited about the arrival of Christ but they did not know what was happening. Christ then began to speak. Everyone was excited and full of joy. Christ's words

became more and more abundant. Their hearts were touched by God's words. And the meeting started to enjoy the words of the Holy Spirit. At that time, people just knew those were the words of God. They did not know that God became flesh and that was the manifestation of Christ. They treated the manifestation of Christ as just a sister who had received revelation from God. People did not understand what 'word became flesh' is because Christ still had not really testify how 'word became flesh' works. People just knew that these words were the revelation of the Holy Spirit. So they treated this sister as a person and not as Christ. When the word of Christ reached the climax, God then started to testify about 'word became flesh'. He explained the difference between the Holy Spirit coming upon man and the Holy Spirit working in man. He also explained the mystery of the Holy Spirit dwelling in man. Only then did the people knew that the sister who has been living among them, who has been shepherding and providing for the church and who was then speaking to them is the 'word became flesh'. That she is Christ; she is God manifesting among them.

Brothers and sisters, when you hear all these words, do you think they are spiritual? I have read some of their writings. I can say they use most of the spiritual words we normally use. How can you tell the difference just from the surface? What conclusion can you draw from the above paragraph? There are at least two points that you need to pay attention to. First, can this 'word became flesh' happen again? They said that the 'word became flesh' has to happen again because Christianity is not accurate. So God has to send His Son to come again. The first time the Son of God came as a son. This time He comes as a daughter.

Brothers and sisters, according to what they said, then Christ does not have the qualification to be the Head of the church. Thus He has to come and do more before He can finish what He has to do. But the Book of Acts said that God has already crowned our Lord as Christ. And what is the basis for that? It is according to His resurrection from the dead. Because of His resurrection, God already crowned Him as Lord and Christ. Hebrews clearly said that because of Christ offering Himself up as the sacrifice, the redemptive work is finished. Revelation told us that Christ has already given us the complete revelation of how He will complete His eternal purpose.

The second point is now that she said she is the Christ she is telling us what God wants us to do at this present age. It is God speaking in the new age and it is the need of the present day people. And since God is speaking to the new age, then the bible became old. Thus we do not need to read the bible. You can see the severity of the confusion their words bring to God's children. I heard

that a lot of people and even the responsible brothers in the house churches were misled by their teachings.

The Building Up by God

Satan continuously uses different ways to confuse God's children, so that we cannot build up the church with Christ as the Head of the church. But we know that the church has to let Christ be the Head. So now what can we learn from the positive side with Christ as the Head so God's building up in us can move forward? Brothers and sisters have to remember one thing. When we are learning to truly live out with Christ as the Head of the church we can summarize two very important matters from the church history and from the history recorded in the bible. This is also what the New Testament clearly reminds us. From either Ephesians or Colossians, it says that we have to learn Christ and to do according to Christ. We need to learn Christ. How do we learn Christ? Man cannot learn Christ by his own effort. There is only one possibility that enables us to learn. Since Christ's life is already in us, we can learn by the leading and governance of Christ in us. Do according to Christ. However He enlightens, we learn to follow His enlightenment. Our Lord has already clearly told us, not only in principles that we need to learn Christ and do according to Christ, but He also concretely showed us how we can learn to let Christ be the Head.

Learn Christ

How to learn Christ? Thank our Lord He has shown us His own image and His own character. Brothers and sisters, you remember that when our Lord was on earth, men opposed Him saying this and that. Do you remember how our Lord replied them? 'If I have not heard of what My Father said, then I have nothing to say; if I have not seen what My Father does, then there is nothing to do'. Brothers and sisters, this is the character of our Lord. He looked up to the Father in every single matter. 'God, how do You look at this matter? Father, how will You carry out this matter? If You do this, then I will do it. If You are not going to do this, then I will not do it'. Our Lord let us clearly see this point in His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. 'My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me, but not as I will but as Thou will'. Brothers and sisters, from this incidence in Gethsemane, you can clearly see our Lord had every reason to ask God to remove that cup. First, this cup was for sinners, I am not a sinner, I am Your son. Second, life comes from Me. If I took this cup, I would have to go through death and that is not My portion. Our Lord's reasons were very good. But thank the Lord. When He came to this difficult choice, He still said, Father, not My

will but Thine will. In I Corinthians chapter 11, how did the Lord put it when He instructed the sisters that they should practice head covering? There it particularly said God is the Head of Christ. Thank our Lord Christ takes God to be His Head. Christ takes His Father to be His Head.

Therefore Christ's prayer in Gethsemane touched the heart of God.

Brothers and sisters, each of us can take notice of this matter and in reality practice let Christ be the Head. Personally we should learn this and corporately the church should learn this. More importantly in the matter of building up the church, we should take note that the Lord had already pointed out some concrete ways to practice this matter. This first thing is in Colossians: let the peace of Christ rule in your heart. The second thing is in I John: abide in the Lord according to the teaching of the anointing; and this is how Christ in us draws us and governs us. On the outside, the Lord also gave us His words so that through His guidance we know how to follow God's heart desire. Outside are God's words. In us it is the life of our Lord and the work of the Holy Spirit that govern. We need to learn to take in God's words on the outside. We also need to learn from Christ's governance inside us.

Reading the Bible

This is very concrete. On this subject of reading God's words, I am not going to ask you whether you read your bible. Rather I am going to ask you what God says to you every time you read the bible. We need to know what God says to us before we can understand the mind of God. We need to be in God to see God's words; to see His leading in His words. God's words are so numerous in the bible. How can we completely understand them? Thank the Lord. He gives us the teaching of the anointing in us; He gives us Christ's peace even though we may not know how a particular matter may end. If God does not let you feel free in the Spirit, then you know how to choose. In their daily church life, brothers and sisters should encourage each other in this learning.

God is Looking for Overcomers

The bible consists of the Old Testament, the New Testament and then lastly the Book of Revelation. We thank and praise our Lord. God has given us a record of His complete work. He uses a pretty long Old Testament to bring men to a state of hopelessness. In the New Testament, our Lord came and He brought men from hopelessness into light. And then He brings us to how God completes His eternal will. The Book of Revelation seems hard to read, but there is a secret to reading it. The Holy Spirit divides Revelation into three parts. One part is about things past, second part is about

the present and the third part is the future. God pays attention to the present matters in the present moments. And what is the present? They are chapters 2 and 3. They talk about the practical, actual spiritual situation of the church. And then it let us see that when the present comes to the end and the buildup of the church is successful, then we see the things that will happen in the future. What do brothers and sisters need to pay special attention to? It is the content of the seven letters in Revelation. Normally, we think the letters describe the condition or the seven stages of the church or they may talk about both of the above scenarios. If this is all we get out of the letters, then we have not been able to really read what is in God's heart. If we just stop at the superficial meaning of the writings, then there is no future for the church. More than half of the seven churches fall into the reprimands from God. Two of them were not reprimanded by the Lord. But the Lord said to Philadelphia, you have a little power. So how can a church grow into maturity in such condition? Thus when we read Revelation, we should not linger on the problems of the church but we should look at what God asks of the church in the seven letters.

Simply put, God wants the church to have power. If the condition of the church is so poor, how can it grow? Thank and praise the Lord, regardless of the condition of the church, God calls for overcomers. Who are the overcomers? Just as the theme of the sharing today, no matter how the outside situation is, overcomers are those who God is looking for. Concretely, they are those who make certain that Christ is the Head. In practice, they stand firm in God's truth. The result is that the church grows up and becomes mature. The maturity of the church is based on these overcomers living out a glorious condition before God. Brothers and sisters, we ask God to give us a sense of urgency to be one who pursues to live in this condition of assuring that Christ is the Head of the church. One of the functions of those children of God who are the first to hope in Christ is to enable the church to grow into the fullness of Christ.

Prayer

Lord, we thank You. May Your words work in our heart; hasten us to follow Your heart desire and to give You pleasure. Lord, we know we have many shortcomings. But thank you for the words You have spoken to the church. You are responsible for those who have a heart for You. You will complete them. May we have a desire to live in the presence of Your heart desire. We give You the glory. We wait for You to come in glory and then we will appear with You in glory. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.