

The Church, the Testimony of the Fullness of Christ

Ephesians 1: 17-23

¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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, ¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might ²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ 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. ²² And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Romans 8: 27-30

²⁷ and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

1John 3:1-2

¹See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

Thank the Lord as I believe brothers and sisters already have a very good understanding of the theme of the conference. The brothers have arranged for me to share on this topic: The church is the fullness of Christ. Thank the Lord when He chose us, He had a very grand, glorious, and honorable plan in mind. When we look at this matter, we can see clearly through the word of the Lord that He had gone beyond individuals and had brought us to the person whom God has chosen. Thank the Lord in Acts chapter 1, the Lord said that you were to go to all these places to be My witnesses. The words of the Lord were very clear. The children of God were gathered together and were scattered according to the Lord's arrangement. Regardless of whether they were gathered together or were

scattered in different places, the Lord had given them a very clear entrustment. What was this entrustment? To be my Witnesses. We thank the Lord. Before I continue with my fellowship with brothers and sisters, I'd like to draw your attention to this matter first. It is true that we are God's witnesses. But when the testimony is laid out, who are we testifying for? In our hearts we want to be the Lord's testimony, but in fact what we do is quite distant from our Lord's testimony. It is because our testimonies often surround what we have experienced, what we have learned, and what we have gained. Of course these are the content that need to be included in our testimonies. But if only these are included, strictly speaking this testimony cannot stand. You might say since we are counting the Lord's grace, how can it not stand? We thank the Lord because the Lord has clearly stated what kind of testimony He wants. The Lord said, "My testimony." We thank the Lord. We see this both in Acts 8 and in Isaiah 43, "You are my witnesses." So when we see that the church is the testimony of the fullness of Christ, we ought to put our focus on our Lord. What we share should be how Christ has worked in me, what the purpose of His work is, what the scope of His work is, and how solemn His work is. These are the things we need to pay attention to.

Prior to this meeting, our brothers have already had a broader sharing on what God wants. But if we turn our sight onto ourselves, we will discover we often make this mistake. Brothers and sisters, do not think I am exaggerating. We can ask ourselves, "What did I believe in when I believed in the Lord?" We will see our true self emerging. It is true we know that the Lord has grace of salvation. What is the content of this grace? We thank the Lord that our elderly Brother has already shared on the focal point yesterday. When we come before God, we come to receive the grace of salvation. This is something we must have. We were sinners, we were lost before God, and we were dead in sins and transgressions. But God has done all kinds of work in order to redeem us. Now comes the question: to what point has God redeemed us? We thank the Lord that brothers and sisters will not give a wrong answer to this question. We believe in the Lord because we are sinners and God wants to save sinners and therefore we believe in Him because we trust that He wants to save sinners. We begin here. But what is in our mind after this? We have some very clear purpose after we believe in the Lord: Firstly, our sins are forgiven; and secondly, we will be under God's blessing in our living and our work for the rest of our lives. This is where we stop at. But we have to ask: Does God's grace of salvation only lead us to His blessings and His remembrance? This is not a wrong understanding but it is not a complete one. As I am sharing on this topic today, I would like to share with you what God's purpose in us is.

God remembers us as individuals but His focus is not on individuals. Individuals need to receive the blessing of salvation from God. But once we have received this blessing, we must go forward until a point where God is satisfied. Brothers and sisters, this is why we are sharing on this topic this morning. It is because for a very long time, there is a lacking among the children of God, that we only see ourselves and others receiving grace of forgiveness of sin from God but do not see what is beyond this grace. But we must ask this question, "God, do You save us just to this point? Is this the apex of Your saving grace?" We dare not to say it is not an apex but this is not the focal point of

the apex. Why? It is because God's salvation toward us carries a very clear purpose. Our Brother has given us a very clear explanation on this yesterday morning.

God is composing the church, a complete reality, with a multitude of people who are saved. One or two persons cannot be called a church. It is with a multitude of people who have entered into Christ. Because of this relationship, the church is manifested. But what do we need to fellowship on if the manifestation of the church is the same matter of salvation of the individuals? This is a very grand matter. If we speak of our personal salvation, it is referring to the correction of our personal relationship with God. When we speak about God's purpose of redemption, our salvation is only a starting point. In this starting point, we need to be right. And on this foundation, we continue to go forward until the fulfillment of God's purpose.

Some brothers and sisters are very clear on this but some are not. You might say, "Individuals are humans and the church is human. What is the difference?" One is the individual humans and the other is a corporate of humans. They have a big difference from each other fundamentally. Thank the Lord, even though there is a difference, the purpose and direction are the same. Simply put, even though we have received grace from the God, we cannot stay at this stage forever. We must move forward to a point that we can be pleasing to God so that God's work of redemption can be fulfilled.

I believe brothers and sisters no longer have questions on why God created man. Our brother had already given us a very clear sharing on this. I will first skip this point and draw your attention to this: Brothers and sisters, when were you saved? Some might be able to give a very clear answer to this and some might not. You will try to recall on what date did you believe in the Lord. Or some might remember the date you were baptized as the date you were saved. These are not contradictory to the principle but this is not what is in God's heart. But if we just bring out this fact, you will find the answer. It is true that you were saved on this particular day, on this particular month, and on this particular year on earth. But when were you predestined to be saved? And why would you receive this grace? Or you and your friends heard the gospel together but you are saved while they are still wandering outside of salvation. What was the reason that I would believe in the Lord? These questions lead to an accurate fact. When did God will to create man? Brothers and sisters, do not think the day you received salvation was a result of God seeing your need for salvation on that day and therefore He saved you. This is how we feel. But in reality it is not so. There are several places in the New Testament that tell us this fact. When were you placed on the list of the saved? It was before the foundation of the world. In other words, before man was created, God has already determined on a particular day you would be saved. Brothers and sisters, where were you before the foundation of the world? We did not exist then. Not only did we not exist, we will question whether the earth existed. Then how could we say that God has determined a certain person would be saved even before the foundation of the world?

We thank the Lord. The Lord does not want us to only know about this fact; He clearly shows us what this fact is based upon. Romans 8 lets us see the history. Before the foundation of the world,

God has already determined who would be saved and come before Him. This is something beyond our imagination. Just like I mentioned, how could it be determined that I would be saved even before I existed or even before the earth existed? This is truly beyond our understanding. But we believe God's word is true. God says that we are seen by Him before the foundation of the world. Not only did God see so and so on earth, God also knew on a certain day this so and so would hear the gospel and had a response to it. And God says, "I will save this person."

Romans 8 shows us a very clear fact. We are foreknown by God before the foundation of the world. "These whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified." It does not stop here. You are justified but God wants to lead you forward. To where? To be glorified. Brothers and sisters, this is God's complete plan. He does not save you just to be free from sin and death. To be saved from sin and death is our basis, but God is able to bring us into His deepest purpose. If we carefully study the words in Romans 8, we will discover many questions. But no matter how many questions there are, you can see a very clear fact. All these things are accomplished by God Himself. God knew when you would become a believer, and according to that time, He called you and justified you. What is justification? What is righteousness? We might say that it has to do with being a good person. We were all bad people in the past and now God made us into good people. But where is the proof? You might say that you were always cursing in the past, but you got rid of it after you believed in the Lord. God's hand is at work in me and has turned me around. Or you might say that you were a greedy person in the past, or you were a scheming person. But after you believed in the Lord you are free of these things. And if you want to go back to these old ways, you will be rebuked within. So I thank God, that is how I know God has saved me and therefore I have become a good person. Brothers and sisters, we cannot look at it this way. What is the opposite of good? It is not too good or not good at all. Regardless, there is a change that can only be brought about by God. No one else can change you. Many of us have heard stories like these: Some people smoke, some use drugs, some drink, or do all kinds of bad things. But after they believed in the Lord, they dropped all these things. That is God's salvation and therefore they have become good people. But brothers and sisters, believing in the Lord is not to turn bad people into good people. God justifies you. What is justification? To put it simply, God counts me right. This is a right person. This is the person I have determined to gain when I created man. We need to see the grace we receive from God originates before the foundation of the world. As I mentioned earlier, it is impossible for us to fathom such matter. It does not matter when we will understand this. But it is while we still do not have the understanding, God has already begun the work of redemption. He wills to gain us and to turn us from a bad person to someone who is righteous. If you understand what it means to be a righteous person, you will never say that you have become someone good and therefore you have become righteous. Of course this is part of the content, but this is not the main content. It is because even if you feel you have become a good person, it does not mean you are right before God. God has to look at us and approve us as the right person. God has to say this person has the basic requirement He wants to gain.

This brings us back to the original purpose of the creation of man. Why did God create man? Did God have nothing to do so He created man to keep Him company? That absolutely was not the case. The basic reason for creating man is for man to glorify God. The secondary reason is for God to deal with Satan, His adversary.

We become righteous because God has sought us and deemed us as right. How are we right? We are right because there is no separation between God and us. We are right because through us God can make Satan bow down and acknowledge He is God. We thank the Lord. This is our common experience. I am not telling you a fairy tale. I am telling you the work of God which is done in us. When we see God is bringing us into justification, are we satisfied? Of course we are at the very beginning. We do not need to wait until we understand we are the righteous to become satisfied. But God does not think this is enough, and He wants to bring us further. You might ask, "Is there more than this? Are we at the destination already?" But the Lord says, "This is not the destination yet. I am to do something even bigger in you." What is it? To be glorified. But is not glorification connected with justification? On the surface it seems that way. We thank and praise our God. He wants us to be glorified. God's heart is satisfied when we are glorified. Now comes the question: What can we do to satisfied God's heart?

We must take note of what is mentioned in Hebrews 2:10, "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory..." Brothers and sisters, do you see the difference? What is higher than being the sons of God? God says that He is pleased that we become the sons of God, but He can only be satisfied when we are brought to this stage. What stage is this? Not only are you sons, but you also are brought into glory. To be sons is salvation. We are satisfied to be sons but God is not. God lets us see that He is to gain many sons, and these sons will also arrive to this destination, which is to enter into glory.

Brothers and sisters, this leads us into a new topic. When we have become children of God, can we still not enter into glory? Does God still need to continue to lead us forward? What is glory? We thank our God. When God speaks to us, He will not tell us only half of the words and leave us guessing. In our mind, we might wonder if there is a difference between being sons and gaining glory. We thank God. He has said these words that are beyond our imagination. Let us go back to Ephesians 1 and take note of the words of Paul, which is the content of his prayers for the children of God. Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1 encompasses many facts but they all boil down to one fact: To be glorified. If you do not understand what it means by "to be gloried", you will find out by reading these words. We will not fellowship on the entire content of his prayer this time. But I would like to fellowship with brothers and sisters on this one point: To enter into glory.

We can divide Paul's prayer into 3 main contents. First: to know what is the hope of His calling; and second: what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. This is the grand picture looking in from the outside. But if you enter into the inside, you might ask what the hope of His calling is and what the riches of the glory are. Then you must not stop here and you will see the third content. Forgive me for saying this, we will not be able to understand this even if our lives

depend on it. But God has already begun it and continue to work it out in us to a point that we will know what glorification means. And the third content: God wants us to know the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. If God stops here, we will not be able to understand. We will ask, “God, what are You saying? Do you mean that this power is so great that it is beyond our comprehension?”

But Paul, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, spoke of this fact. The surpassing greatness of His power is the power manifested in His son. God said that He will also manifest this same power on you. God wants us to know the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. Who said that? God did. God said that He would manifest in us who believe the power that was manifested in Christ. It is very clear. God has used His surpassing great power to raise Christ up from death, to lift Him up to heaven, and to give Him the authority to rule over all. Who has the power that is greater than this? If you look at Adam’s descendants, there is none. But God is clearly telling us, who were once Adam’s descendants, and said that it was not a joke. I am telling you the truth. You who were once descendants of Adam, because of God’s grace and mercy, and the power He manifested, will be brought into the fact which He had revealed in the only Son in His bosom.

This is tremendous, brothers and sisters. Think about what our origin was. Do not think because you were born in the family of a theologian, then you have a very clear understanding on spiritual matters. And do not think you were born in the family of a physicist, and since the physicists have a vast knowledge of the universe, then you have a very good understanding of physics. Nowadays, astrophysics is so advance, can you say it is false? I live in San Francisco. It is a good place. Now drought is present everywhere in the world. The place I live in also is experiencing drought. But the drought is not so severe that we can see the lake bed. Even though there is some limitation of how much water we can use, but it is not to a point that we need to go elsewhere to fetch our water with buckets and bring them home. We need to ask this question, “Why is there a drought?” I am not speaking of spiritual matters. If we are to speak of spiritual matters, we will go back to the flood during Noah’s time and ask, “Why is there a flood?” Who has such great powers to turn the current in the air around and change things around in the air? You may be able to understand these things from the physics point of view. But have you asked who was in control of these things? Not only are these things controlled, they can also be changed around. I was not exaggerating when I say many things are false even though they sound reasonable. Thanks and praise our Lord. He lets us see the reasons behind many phenomena but we are not able to understand what is behind all these reasons. But God pointed at the entire fact of our Lord’s resurrection from the dead, His ascension, and His entering into glory. He has pointed out this power. Can you accept this power? Will you ask whether this power is real? This is real. Because these are God’s words: “The surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.” Do not overlook how God describes us who believe. Who are you? You are the ones who come before God by faith. Why do you believe? This may lead to many questions. To put it in the simplest term: What are you made of? Brother Kaung has already shared on this. Look at ourselves. If I were a girl and I participated in the Miss America Beauty Pageant or the Miss Universe Beauty Pageant and I won. Isn’t that great? Of

course it is. There is only one in the world. Brothers and sisters, if you look deeper into it, what were you originally? You were just dust. You are nothing. You are only a pile of earth. But God used this pile of dirt, according to His will and with His great power, more importantly He was willing to put Himself into this dirt, and made it into a living soul.

Brothers and sisters, if we truly know our reality and God is to manifest the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, we must wonder if it is possible that we who are made of dust, can now be brought into Christ's resurrection power? Not only is it possible, the work has already begun very evidently in us. We are those who believe. And God is manifesting the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. Where is this surpassing greatness of His power manifested? This power surpasses any time, space or anything on earth. When this power is revealed, it brings forth a result. Our Lord was exalted to the highest in the universe through this power. What happened after He was exalted to the highest place? We will see something tremendous at the end of Ephesians 1. The many things that our Lord had experienced, God also cause all these things to happen to us. And through all these things, God places us in the same condition as Christ. Do you think these things are too great for us? You are satisfied just to be able to manage your family. You ought to be able to enjoy your family when you go home; but often when you go home, it is like you are entering a war zone. But God wants us to gain authority over all things. Since Christ has gained all the authority as stated in God's word, we who believe also will be brought to be like Christ in all aspects, whether in thoughts, in sight, or in deeds.

If we truly look at the purpose of salvation, we cannot stop at being saved. We need to see that God begins with saving us and continues to lead us into glory. This glory is very concrete and practical. It is now manifested in all things. When the time is fulfilled, all things will submit under Christ's authority. The words of Ephesians 1 continue on and show us a secret: "And He put all things in subjection under His feet (1:22)." All things are under the Lord's authority, and He is made the head over all things. The matter is right but it is still lacking one thing. What is the purpose of our Lord receiving this glorious arrangement from God? The purpose is not for Himself because He is already in that purpose and He is the purpose. But now the Bible says with the resurrected power, God has made all things under Christ's authority and is made the head over all things. Why would God do this? Brothers and sisters can see the secret without my explanation. The glorious and immense power received by Christ is not for Himself because He already has the power. It cannot be changed no matter what. But God is pleased to give His Son this arrangement, on one hand it is to prove to the whole universe that the only Son in His bosom is the highest in all things. But the fact of being the highest is not only enjoyed by Him alone. The Book of Ephesians points out it is for the church. Our Lord is exalted to such a high and glorious place with power, is not for Himself, but for the church. We mentioned earlier we are but a clump of dirt no matter how we adorn ourselves. But now God is placing us in a new position. What is this new position? All the glory and honor received by Christ have become the church's. Why should this be? It is because when God created man, His purpose was to glorify Himself on one hand and to deal with Satan on the other. How does God carry out this work? It is through the path His Son has trod on to bring forth

this fact: Many lumps of dirt now have become the believers and are displayed before God. And God put all Christ's fullness into them. Not only does God give them all the fullness, even Christ Himself and what He has, God has also given them to us. We often hear some brothers say that apart from Christ's godhead, we have received all that Christ has. We thank our God.

Now we can understand when we look at the church, we have to see she is filled with the fullness of Christ. If the fullness of Christ cannot be manifested in the church, there is no ground for the church to be the testimony of Christ. What testimony can she have? For sure it will not be Christ's testimony. What can replace Christ's testimony? Nothing can replace Christ's testimony. You may be reminded of some other's words in Ephesians. These words are for us believers. Ephesians 1:12, "We who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory." What is it saying? It speaks how God's glory is manifested in all things in the universe. God has gained a group of people, not just individuals, who has received God's glorious work fully. And God gives them a new name, a new position in which the church stands, and they are called by God as those who were the first to hope in Christ.

We thank the Lord. Why is it when we mention about the eternal purpose of God, we are not referring to individuals being exalted to the highest by God? But we must return to this fact that God does not wish to gain many individuals. God wishes to group all these individuals into the life of Christ and make them into this new corporate body which is called the church. That is why it continues to say that it is for the church that He has gained all these abundant heavenly and spiritual experiences. And it is by our faith that we are united with Christ in all these experiences He has received from God. However Christ is, the church ought to be the same. How Christ was loved by the Father after He resurrected, God transfer the whole matter onto us who believe. Brothers and sisters, these are very important words because they explain the main points of God's work to us one by one. I trust that brothers and sisters can understand this matter as our fellowship comes to this point. We often hear some brothers fellowship on Revelations 2 and 3 about the seven letters to the churches from the Lord. From these letters we can understand one matter. Brothers and sisters often ask this question: Because of what is in sight, we often doubt how can a church like this become the glorious church and how can the church become a mature church. It totally does not qualify.

I like to share with you what God wants. When we read the seven letters, I don't know how many times you have read them, what do you gather after reading them? This is very important. Maybe let me change the subject a bit. How can the church reach maturity? That is difficult for us to answer. We may say that we have a large number of people attending the meetings so therefore we are mature. Or we may say that we speak of the word of God and nothing else in our meetings so we should be mature. Maybe these would be the answers. Maybe we are close to being mature but these are not true maturity. The seven letters to the church are very clear. Before we look at the conclusion of the seven letters, we need to know the standard of the church's maturity. This is not a standard set by us but is set by God Himself. What is the maturity of the church? Thank the Lord. He shows us in Romans that until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in then one of the conditions of the church's maturity is fulfilled. But this is not the only condition. The other condition is

mentioned in Ephesians. Not only does the church need to increase in number, more importantly the church needs to be filled by Christ. As mentioned in chapter 4, all that is in Christ becomes the all in all of the church. Whenever the church is completely filled by Christ, then the time will come. If He tarries, then His words are not accurate. But His words are true; so we see the maturity of the church depends on the increase in number on one hand, and the spiritual life has reached the fullness of Christ on the other. Then you may say that we will never reach that point if that is the case. But we thank the Lord. The seven letters to the churches let us see it is the overcomers who will receive the fullness of Christ. So what is the basis of the church's hastening Christ's return and ushering in the completion of the will of God? It is the maturity of the church. How does the church's maturity come about? It is by being united with Christ. How is this unity manifested? It is by our submission to God's authority. The church needs to learn and reach the point to acknowledge whatever Christ says is correct. If it is not spoken by Christ, no matter how pleasant it sounds, it cannot be beneficial to the church.

We thank God. When we look at the redemption plan, we cannot only look at our own salvation but we need to start from there and continue on to become a part of the maturity of the church. This brings about many issues including the returning of the Lord which brothers and sisters have different opinions on. But these are not important, because, as it is said in the Book of Philippians, all will be summed up in one when the church is mature. And through the church, which is one with God, all creations are brought back to God. If we are to manifest God's testimony accurately and truthfully, then our focus is not on how the testimony can be brought forth, but to focus on how we can let Christ's fullness to be the all in all of the church and whether I can be a part of it.

What we shared on today is something very basic. Whether you have heard it before or not, we need to treat this with a serious attitude. We need to examine whether I have a function in enabling the church to manifest the fullness of Christ and to bring forth the practical reality of God's eternal purpose. May the Lord be gracious to us.

Let us pray. Lord, may You give us revelation through the Holy Spirit, so that we can come before Your throne and see how great Your arrangements are. You have willed this from the beginning. Even though there have been many obstacles, but no one can stop Your hands in accomplishing Your work. We thank the Lord for the grace we have received. And we look unto the Lord as we continue to live and grow in Your glorious will. May the Lord keep those who follow You faithfully to live out Your glorious will in these chaotic times. We give You worship and praise. We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.