

**LITTLE NORTHWEST FELLOWSHIP SUNDAY
OPENING REMARKS - BELLINGHAM 10/7/73**

Br. Ted Smith

Dear Brethren, we again, another year, have the honor and pleasure to welcome you into our midst for the 16th annual gathering here in Bellingham. We welcome you as our guests in the Lord, and we hope you will feel refreshed and strengthened by the food that is on the menu, and the good fellowship in Christ. And we hope when you go away you will feel as happy as when you arrived, and, we hope you will feel happier.

I can remember when I was a young lad, I was so delighted with the prospect of all mankind being in perfect harmony. This might have been suggested to my mind by that delightful quote from Volume I: “Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act.” “A perfect society”—how we do yearn for a “perfect society” so eloquently described in Volume I. Truly mankind will have their hearts overflowing with gratitude to the Heavenly Father when this perfect society is reached at the end of the Millennium.

Can we as the New Creation have a “perfect society” in our relationship with one another in Christ? Or do we have to wait for this when we reach perfection beyond the veil, in the First Resurrection? We can in our heart’s intention; we cannot attain it in the flesh; and truly we do have to wait for the perfect state in the First Resurrection.

A “perfect society” in our midst, in the present life is an ideal that we are expected to aim at. Certain principles of conduct of the highest order are outlined for us and expressed in our Heavenly Father’s Word. We are exhorted to put into practice these principles in our daily lives. We can think of two exhortations that are very pointed: “mind the same things,” and “unity of the spirit.” We are making a “perfect society” in our midst, our theme this morning, and we shall consider the two exhortations as principles that will make this perfect society in our midst possible: “mind the same things”, and “unity of the spirit.”

I think it will be helpful to the practical understanding of our theme if we use some illustrations first—illustrations that are understandable to all of us from actual personal experience or observation. Let us take for example a married couple who are doing well in their living together and working together. What is the secret of their harmony? Is it not that they are both endeavoring to please one another—do they not have the same interests in life and are working together at making a success of the marriage

arrangement? They carefully respect one another as individuals and do not try to possess one another, but let each one have liberty to have his own judgments and such judgments are given consideration. They are loyal to one another and never use jokes as sly digs, in fun. They respect one another and try to assist one another to be an individual and grow in his own way and at his own pace.

Could we say correctly that this would be “minding the same things,” and “unity of the spirit” on the plane of natural men and women? I think we are on safe ground when we say this.

Let us take another illustration on the plane of natural men and women. For instance astronomers: do they not have common interests and “mind the same things” and have a “unity of spirit”? They are all interested in the same things and all are endeavoring to act in harmony with the aspirations of astronomers. We could take any of the professions as illustrations of our point—there is a common interest, a common understanding and common striving to betterment in each profession. There might be various ideas, but it would be understood by all that the ideas would be for the promotion of the ideals and purposes of the profession.

Now let us come to the particular consideration of our profession—being Christians—in relationship with Christ and in relationship with one another in the highest of all professions. In fact our profession rises above the life of the natural man, and finds the tendencies of nature opposing us every step of the way.

We find ourselves living in a very unusual time in the great Christian drama. We find ourselves possessed of a large Christian helmet—we have an extremely large amount of understanding of the Divine Plan to enable us to be intelligent Christians in a time of increase of knowledge in an educated world. All of this understanding is included in the things “that we mind” together. This is a part of our “perfect society.” We also have, by the grace of God, an unusual degree of understanding of prophecy and the signs of the times. We have enough to enable us to recognize where we are on the stream of time and what is going on in what is Scripturally called the “Harvest or end of the age.” We are still required to “walk by faith” and apparently the Lord is pleased to withhold some knowledge from us so we must walk by faith. For instance, we do not know when the last members of the church will complete their course, and we do not know just how every detail will be worked out to overthrow Satan’s empire, and establish the Kingdom of God on earth. But we do know these things are going on, and will be completed on time—God’s time. All of these things we “mind together”. These are the “same things” that are mutually accepted and are parts of the delights that we have of understanding today.

In our High calling we are to walk in the footsteps of the Redeemer and become like Him in character. This is to the end that we will be equipped for good works in this life and for the greater good works of the next life in “blessing all the families of the earth.” Our Redeemer and Master taught us, by his words and by the words of the Apostles that we are to love one another as he loved the disciples. We have “unity of the spirit” in this matter. We have the same attitude of mind, the same disposition to assist one another in this High calling. This is a part of our “perfect society” as New Creatures in Christ.

We are clearly taught that we are Ambassadors for God in this life. As expressed in 2 Cor. 5:20 we hold forth the message of reconciliation. This is a part of our “perfect society”—we have the same spirit on this in that we all know that we are God’s representatives in the world and we hold forth the word of life. We all “mind these same things” and engage in witnessing the Truth that we might find those whose hearts are longing to be reconciled to God. We all have the “same spirit”, a “unity of spirit”—the same mind, the same disposition to witness to the Truth as long as we live.

Earlier we referred to a good marriage of a man and woman on the natural plane, and how they worked together and tried to show their love for one another in every way possible. They “minded the same things” in their marriage; and they had “a unity of spirit” toward one another. A consideration of this illustration on the natural plane helps us to grasp the spirit that we should possess in our getting along together in our “perfect society” as New Creatures.

About three years ago a special study was made concerning the meaning of the “unity of the spirit.” “Unity of the spirit” means mutual agreement concerning certain basic principles that must be put into practice if we are to have a “perfect society” as new creatures. There are 11 typewritten pages to this study, and I will lift just a few of these principles from this study to close our remarks.

One very important principle is gratitude for all of God’s blessings. Another one is the desire to be at peace amongst ourselves. This is very pointedly expressed in Eph. 4:3, Phillips translation: “Make it your aim to be at one in the spirit, and you will inevitably be at peace with one another.” This is just plain logic, isn’t it—that if our aim—the aim of all of us, is to be at one in spirit, peace will naturally follow? It becomes vitally important then to understand what this oneness of spirit in Christ is supposed to be. Love of the Truth is an extremely important basic principle. This is expressed very strongly in Volume VI, page 264: “Next to the Lord, the Truth is the most precious thing in all the world; it is not to be trifled with, not to be played with; and whoever is negligent along this line will himself sustain injury.”

Another very important principle is brought to our attention in Heb. 10:24 and 25. We quote in part: “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”

Our influence as Christians is to promote goodness in others whether they be fellow-Christians, or people of the world; and we are never to relax this attitude. In provoking to love and to good works, we must try to be considerate of one another's personality traits that the most good can be done. The Golden Rule is very helpful in suggesting a course of action or the right word to speak.

We are all to “mind the same things” and beware of selfish “independent thinking.” “Independent thinking” can lead us to ignore the means used of the Lord to give us our “meat in due season” here in the end of the age. And we are to watch out for the carnal spirit expressed by Paul in 1 Cor. 1:12 and 13. This carnal spirit is to rally behind some one brother or an organization and measurably despise those who refuse to do this. We are united to one another and to Christ because of the spirit of the Truth which is mutually appreciated. As Paul said: “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you; or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”

A well-working machine is a good illustration of Christians “dwelling together in unity.” The parts of such a machine are working smoothly and orderly because they are well put together. We are well put together if we are under the supervision of the Great Engineer; or in plain language, if we come into harmony with the Spirit of God we will work together in accordance with the Holy Spirit. In our working together we want to be sure of our own intentions, and judge ourselves objectively and righteously. So we can see that the “oneness of spirit” means simply that we are to have the one Holy Spirit of Truth operating in our lives—the various qualities of the Holy Spirit are to be the guide lines for our thinking, our words and our conduct. This oneness of the Holy Spirit is to operate in all the affairs of Christian living—in the home, in the church, and in our dealings with the world.

We now turn you over to the waiters who will serve you Truth in “oneness of spirit.”