

## Welcome Address

(Ted Smith. Given at the Little Northwest Fellowship Sunday On October 9, 1977)

Dear Friends: Welcome to Fellowship Sunday. Our gathering this year is the 20th time since we started in 1958. How time flies! Last Sunday I attended the little convention in Waco, Texas and I was told this gathering was the 24th. I have the pleasure of bringing to you Christian love from the brethren who assembled at Waco. I became acquainted with two new brethren that I had never met before—that is, they were new to me. Bro. Dudley Chastain and Bro. Dan Slivinsky were the new brethren that I had never met before. Both of them gave good wholesome Truth talks. Bro. Strickland was ill, so could not attend. Incidentally we learned that Sister Hirsh of Philadelphia would have a birthday early in November, and she would be 100 years old. Bro. Hirsh was a pilgrim in Bro. Russell's day, but finished his course many years ago. Bro. Nichols showed some interesting colored slides—pictures that were taken in color while in Israel and when he visited the great pyramid. Sister Nichols assisted in the showing of the slides.

I know we are all thankful for the precious Harvest Truth and are rejoicing in its possession. We can properly be said to be an intellectual group of Christians. Our knowledge is based upon a complete harmonization of the Scriptures, and this harmonization in turn is based upon reason and logic. But is knowledge the end of the matter? Are we to be merely an intellectual people, able to expound the various details of God's glorious plan? It is true that we must have knowledge and understanding to be God's representatives and ambassadors in the world. And it is essential that we witness to God's plan and purposes as accurately as we can. But what about ourselves personally? Will we gain God's approval by being good witnesses of the truth in the world? This is essential but it is not the end of the matter. We ourselves personally must have a certain spirit.

In the 14th chapter of John we read of Jesus' conversation with a woman of Samaria. The true water of life and proper worship were the two topics touched upon by Jesus. In V. 23 Jesus said to the woman: "The true worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." If we are true worshipers, or if we are seeking to be true worshipers, it is vitally important that we understand what true worship, in spirit and in truth, is.

In our book, *Songs in the Night*, I found an explanation of true worship that was very simple and easy to understand. This attracted my special attention because it seemed to me that it got to the very center of true worship and brought to light just what kind of people we are supposed to be. I turn now to the date August 15th which reads as follows: "Worship in Spirit and in truth does not apply simply to prayer, praise, supplication and thanksgiving. It goes deeper than all these and takes hold upon the affections, upon the

heart, and hence signifies not an 'act of worship' but rather a life of worship—a life in which, through the begetting of the Spirit and the knowledge of the divine plan, the individual becomes so at one with God and so in unison with the law of God and all the features of the plan of God that it is, in the words of our Lord, his meat and his drink to do the Father's will. This is worship in Spirit and in truth. It will find its expression in bended knee and in orderly and reverential demeanor in approach to God in personal prayer, in family prayer and in company with the household of faith, and it will find its expression also in all the acts and words of life. The captivated heart will seek to bring every talent of the body into complete subjection to the will of God and of Christ. The whole of this is the worship which God seeketh; and, surely, only those who are thus captivated to the Lord in heart, and who serve him in Spirit and in truth and endeavor to have his will done in their hearts, words and conduct are in the full sense the true worshipers whom the Lord seeketh; the 'little flock' the faithful 'royal priesthood.'”

When we stop and analyze this quote from the pen of the Pastor, we can realize how profound it is—it catches the real meaning of the Master's words addressed to the woman of Samaria. This worship “takes hold upon the affections, upon the heart, and hence signifies not an 'act of worship' but rather a life of worship.” It is “a life in which, through the begetting of the Spirit and the knowledge of the divine plan, the individual becomes so at one with God and so in unison with the law of God and all the features of the plan of God, that it is, in the words of our Lord, his meat and his drink to do the Father's will.”

We eat and drink to keep alive. Along natural lines our food and our drink keep the body in working order so we can do things the body is fitted for. The body in normal health enjoys its natural functions along so many different lines. If we are deprived of food and drink the body will sicken and die.

When we become new creatures, begotten of the spirit, there is a different kind of life, a different outlook, a different point of view entirely. In doing the Father's will we are doing that which gives us strength and enjoyment.

Along natural lines we know there are many activities in life that keep people interested and happy. This is all aside from the eating of food or drinking water. For instance some might regard a sport of some kind as that which is their meat and their drink. Some are all wrapped up in playing golf and try to become expert in the game. They are happy only if they can eat and drink the game of golf. The same with tennis which has become very popular today, especially with certain women. Or some feel alive only if they are wrapped up in some absorbing business project. And some others are deeply involved and interested in doing some particular good for their fellow man. Such an activity is their meat and their drink. I think this is proverbial of astronomers, musicians and scientists, speaking generally of course, as there are exceptions.

These illustrations should enable us to understand our attitude as new creatures. Our meat and our drink is the doing of God's will, and trying to find out more and more what God's will is for us. This is our life—what we are interested in, what keeps up our interest in life as Christians.

There are so many interesting facets to the Christian life—"worshipping God in spirit and in truth." It would take a long time to touch upon all the facets of the Christian life, so we will mention just a few of the things that are our meat and our drink.

We think of Paul's words in Phil. 3:13, 14: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This was part of Paul's meat and drink to "reach forth unto those things which are before, and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He was running for a grand prize and he was striving earnestly to attain the mark that he might win this prize. This was what kept Paul alive, among other things.

In Gal. 5:13, we read "By love serve one another." Here is something else that is our meat and our drink—loving to serve one another. And if we love the brethren, we know we have passed from death unto life. It is our meat and our drink to "show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light." Deep gratitude for being in the light, and out of darkness leads to our willingness to show forth God's praises. In Rom. 2:7 we read "By patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." This is our meat and our drink. And in connection with this we remember Matt. 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." This is our meat and our drink—"seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness." This is a wonderful combination—"the kingdom of God and his righteousness." And the words of our Lord in Luke 12:32 are very inspiring, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." It is the Father's good pleasure to give, and it is our meat and drink to strive hard to win the Father's approval and the kingdom.

I would like to bring to your attention a wonderful Reprint article entitled THE HEAVENLY TREASURE. It is on page 1820. It is a very choice article from the pen and heart of the Pastor. The first opportunity you have, I urge you to read it and enjoy its inspiration to worship the Lord in Spirit and in Truth.

I am mindful at this time of another comment in Songs in the Night. It is for March 8th. The text is Joshua 1:6, "Be strong and of a good courage. The comment reads in part as follows: "It requires real courage of the highest order to stand for the Lord's truth and his

people when these are misunderstood, misinterpreted, antagonized. It takes real courage to stand for the light when the great Adversary with a world-wide influence brands it as darkness and leads an assault against it. It requires real courage to denounce the darkness meekly, persistently, when it has on its side wealth, culture, influence and churchianity.” This is so correctly stated and so true of our experiences. It is profitable to read this several times to get the full force of what the Pastor is really saying.

Another facet of our meat and drink is expressed in Gal. 6:10: “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” I think it gives us special pleasure to be able to reach out to do good to others—assist them in some way or be generous with our possessions. And doing good to others can be expanded to include our enemies. Our Lord said in Matt. 5:45 that the Father maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust”; and in the 48th verse Jesus said “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” It is our meat and our drink to be kind to the “just and the unjust.”

I can think of another aspect of our life. It is expressed in Psalm 119:97: “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.” This is our meat and our drink—we enjoy meditating on the law of God. This gives us strength, understanding and incentive to do the will of God. The Psalmist goes on: “Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. I have not departed from thy judgments; for thou hast taught me. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.” These words describe our life!

In James 4:6, 7 the Apostle wrote: “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God.” And Peter tells us that we have an important work to do to add certain character qualities to our faith. All this is so vital to our gaining eternal life, that it is part of our daily meat and drink to study the principles of Christian character, that we make sure that we understand them and practice and develop them in our everyday living. And it is essential that we study that we might understand the qualities that we are to put away from us as harmful and that would block our attaining eternal life. So it is our meat and drink to walk carefully and circumspectly and prove to the Lord and to ourselves that we have the perfect standard as our aim and to recognize and put away every evil quality as soon as it is recognized in our lives. If we are conscientious in judging our thoughts and words and acts and call everything by its right name, then we will make sure progress and win and maintain the Lord’s approval. When I say, call everything by its right name, I mean that we will be scrupulously honest

and not let the flesh get away with anything that is wrong. If we have been rude, we will admit it and correct ourselves. If we have been unkind, we will admit it and become more kind.

And now, dear brethren, I hope those on the program will assist you in this all-important work of worshiping God in Spirit and in truth.