The Center for

Unity



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A Bible Study given by Andreas Dura

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Welcome to our study everyone. Today we will begin with a question. Why is it that there are so many different views and opinions in the world, when all people mean so well? One person believes the solution to all problems can be reached in this way, whereas another person believes it can be reached in another way. There are so many different opinions and ideas. This divided situation makes us unable to agree about how to move forward in unity, in order to finish the work and to do what is necessary to solve the problems of this world.

Does God have a solution for this? What would He want us to do? What did He want to do in the past?

When God looked upon the world in the beginning, He saw this division and disunity. He saw the fighting that happened among people. He saw it all the time. His solution began by calling out a family—the family of Israel and his children. They became a large people. Through them, God wanted to place a pattern in the world. He wanted to show how unity works and how everyone could finally agree, being of one heart and one mind. The tower of Babel was quite the opposite of this. The people were all together at the beginning, but afterwards they were in terrible disunity. They ultimately had to go in different directions.

God wanted to unify. He wanted to unify His people first. Everyone should see that there were a people who were really unified. The purpose was to motivate others to desire to do the same.

This unity also required a clear focus upon the divine laws, which are good for humankind and keep us alive. It is the transgression of those laws which causes all the problems in the world. We can put all this under the heading of “selfishness.” It is selfishness which causes division, and selfishness which causes all kinds of problems.

God wanted a people to show a pattern of what concentrating and obeying His laws does—for all humankind. That was His purpose. He established a center for this purpose. That was the sanctuary. The people were to learn about the laws in the sanctuary. They should become acquainted with God and His character there. They could become unified in that place. It was very important that the people of Israel should recognize that place as the center, as the source of their prosperity, and as the source of their unity. It was extremely important. This is what God tried to establish from the very beginning.

People often say that it doesn't matter how we worship. They say that we can worship as we please. But the fact that this is untrue is made clear at the beginning of the Bible, in *Genesis* 4. That is where we find the story of Cain and Abel. When these two brothers grew up, Abel became a shepherd and Cain cultivated the ground. Those were their professions. Both professions are very noble, without question. Perhaps today we would say that the tiller of the ground is even nobler, because it is more important nowadays to have food from plants than from animals, since it's not possible to feed the entire world's population from animal products. In those days, sheep were reared for other reasons than meat, but that doesn't matter for our discussion now. The point is that both professions were noble.

Both brothers brought a sacrifice. Cain brought a sacrifice from his crops as an offering. Abel brought a lamb and sacrificed it. We read that the Lord accepted Abel and his gift, but He did not accept Cain and his gift.

As a child, I always wondered why God accepted Abel's gift, but not Cain's. Wasn't God playing favorites? *Genesis* 4 even says that God accepted Abel, but He did not accept Cain or his gift. So, God accepted the person. That was more important than accepting the gift.

God doesn't arbitrarily favor one person above another. We need to understand this.

He is an absolutely impartial judge. This means that since God accepted one but not the other, it must have been because of something in the hearts of the brothers. We know what that something was. God had specifically prescribed how the offering should be brought and made. It wasn't to be brought only from the soil. They could offer something from the ground in addition to the main offering. But there must be a blood offering. Because that indicated the surrender of self. Bringing a bleeding animal was difficult to do. It is a hard job. By doing this, God wanted people to understand that it is difficult, but necessary, to surrender self. In summary we could say that Abel surrendered himself, but Cain did not. Cain refused to surrender himself. He was too proud. Essentially, Cain said, “I will bring God my sacrifice and He should accept it.” By contrast, Abel said, “I accept God's conditions.”

It would also have been very humbling for Cain to have to go to his younger brother, Abel, and ask him to give him a lamb for the sacrifice. Cain didn't want to do this. He wanted to bring his own sacrifice, instead of asking someone else. He presented a sacrifice from himself.

There was a huge difference between these two kinds and modes of worship. God wanted to let Israel know this. He wanted to teach them and show through them that it's important how we worship. It does matter. It is not the case that we can just worship as we please—as long as we worship. No, it really matters. It is not so much the form that matters. These verses speak of both the person and their gift. It is the motive behind the worship that matters. This motive is also expressed in a form.

Let's read the main text for today, in *Deuteronomy* 12, where God gave some very special instructions.

“These are the decrees and regulations you must be careful to obey when you live in the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must obey them as long as you live.

“When you drive out the nations that live there, you must destroy all the places where they worship their gods—high on the mountains, up on the hills, and under every green tree. [Just imagine, there were little places of worship everywhere—on the mountains, under the trees, and so on. We can also see them here in Germany today, when we go for a walk. But God told them to destroy all of those places. They were to all be done away with. Why? Because they were not promoting unity, happiness, or life. In fact, those places turned the minds to a false god—a cruel god who required child sacrifices, for instance. Baal required child sacrifices, among many other awful things. These requirements did not promote unity. So, these places had to be destroyed.] Break down their altars and smash their sacred pillars. Burn their Asherah poles and cut down their carved idols. Completely erase the names of their gods!

“Do not worship the Lord your God in the way these pagan peoples worship their gods. Rather, you must seek the Lord your God at the place of worship he himself will choose from among all the tribes—the place where his name will be honored. [This is gospel order. God has prescribed an order. Instead of many little places, He gave the people one place to worship. Everyone was to come there. It was very important. When Israel apostatized, they started to worship at all the little places again. It happened gradually. They didn't start to worship Baal suddenly. Rather, they gradually adopted this and that custom. One family had the idea of worshiping God in one way, and another family had another idea about how to worship Him. The Israelites were also influenced by their surroundings to some degree. And ultimately, they ended up worshiping Baal like the other nations did. That's why it was so important for them not even to begin to go down that pathway. That is why God told them that there would be just one place where His name would be honored. The people were to go to that one place.] There you will bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, your sacred offerings, your offerings to fulfill a vow, your voluntary offerings, and your offerings of the firstborn animals of your herds and flocks. [“There ...” That is where they were supposed to offer everything. That was where they should take their tithes and sacred offerings. The tithes were not to be taken here or there, but rather to that one designated place. The same was true of the other offerings.] There you and your families will feast in the presence of the Lord your God, and you will rejoice in all you have accomplished because the Lord your God has blessed you.” *Deuteronomy* 12:1-7.

God made it abundantly clear that the place of worship was not supposed to be a place of sadness. It was to be a place of happiness. He told the people that they would rejoice in all they accomplished because of the blessing of the Lord.

“Your pattern of worship will change. Today all of you are doing as you please, [They were wandering in the wilderness. So, their place of worship changed, because they were traveling.] because you have not yet arrived at the place of rest, the land the Lord your God is giving you as your special possession. But you will soon cross the Jordan River and live in the land the Lord your God is giving you. When he gives you rest from all your enemies and you're living safely in the land, you must bring everything I command you—your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, your sacred offerings, and your offerings to fulfill a vow—to the designated place of worship, the place the Lord your God chooses for his name to be honored. [Everything was to go to that one place.]

“You must celebrate there in the presence of the Lord your God with your sons and daughters and all your servants. And remember to include the Levites who live in your towns, for they will receive no allotment of land among you. Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings just anywhere you like. [Not anywhere you like, and not any way you like. Instead, the sacrifices should be made in the place which God prescribed. He designated both the place and the manner or mode.] You may do so only at the place the Lord will choose within one of your tribal territories. There you must offer your burnt offerings and do everything I command you.

“But you may butcher your animals and eat their meat in any town whenever you want. You may freely eat the animals with which the Lord your God blesses you. All of you, whether ceremonially clean or unclean, may eat that meat, just as you now eat gazelle and deer. But you must not consume the blood. You must pour it out on the ground like water.

“But you may not eat your offerings in your hometown—neither the tithe of your grain and new wine and olive oil, nor the firstborn of your flocks and herds, nor any offering to fulfill a vow, nor your voluntary offerings, nor your sacred offerings. [As far as offerings are concerned, not in your hometown. Neither the tithe, nor any offering. Nothing in your hometown. Offerings were especially designated to be brought into the place that God had appointed, where the sanctuary stood.] You must eat these in the presence of the Lord your God at the place he will choose. Eat them there with your children, your servants, and the Levites who live in your towns, celebrating in the presence of the Lord your God in all you do. And be very careful never to neglect the Levites as long as you live in your land.

“When the Lord your God expands your territory as he has promised, and you have the urge to eat meat, you may freely eat meat whenever you want. [And wherever you want.] It might happen that the designated place of worship—the place the Lord your God chooses for his name to be honored—is a long way from your home. If so, you may butcher any of the cattle, sheep, or goats the Lord has given you, and you may freely eat the meat in your hometown, as I have commanded you. Anyone, whether ceremonially clean or unclean, may eat that meat, just as you do now with gazelle and deer. But never consume the blood, for the blood is the life, and you must not consume the lifeblood with the meat. ...

“Take your sacred gifts and your offerings given to fulfill a vow to the place the Lord chooses. [That is the sacred gifts and the place the Lord chooses.] You must offer the meat and blood of your burnt offerings on the altar of the Lord your God. The blood of your other sacrifices must be poured out on the altar of the Lord your God, but you may eat the meat. Be careful to obey all my commands, so that all will go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and pleasing to the Lord your God. [They could eat wherever they wished, if they killed a lamb and ate it. As far as sacred gifts are concerned, they were always to be brought into the sanctuary and to the altar that God had specified.]

“When the Lord your God goes ahead of you and destroys the nations and you drive them out and live in their land, do not fall into the trap of following their customs and worshiping their gods. ..” *Deuteronomy* 12:8­30.

The purpose God made these laws was twofold. Firstly, it was for unity among themselves. If everyone would worship just as they pleased and wanted, they would soon be of different opinions. One would worship this way, another would worship that way. There would be strife among them. The second problem would be that the purity of the worship would not exist anymore. In order to maintain the purity of worship it was essential that they would all come to one place and always worship there. That was gospel order. In fact, God was so strict about this, that He even said that if someone brought a burnt offering somewhere else, then that person should be uprooted from the people.

“Give them this command as well. If any native Israelite or foreigner living among you offers a burnt offering or a sacrifice but does not bring it to the entrance of the Tabernacle to offer it to the Lord, that person will be cut off from the community.” *Leviticus* 17:8, 9. That law was quite strict.

The reason God said this is that He wanted to establish a pattern for the whole world. To show how unity works, and how obedience to God's law works. In order to do this, the first step of deviation must be prevented. That is so important. Even the slightest way of doing it differently would eventually lead to great problems.

The people of Israel were very obedient about following this in their first years in

Canaan. They were very strict. They understood what God had said to Moses. Joshua was the one who really enforced these laws. He reminded the people again and again of these laws which God had set up.

When they possessed the land, they fought together against the Canaanites and finally they went into the land to take it. On the other side of the Jordan River, on the East side, two and a half tribes settled. They erected an altar there. Let's read this story.

“So the men of Reuben, Gad, and the half­tribe of Manasseh left the rest of Israel at Shiloh in the land of Canaan. They started the journey back to their own land of Gilead, the territory that belonged to them according to the Lord's command through Moses.

“But while they were still in Canaan, and when they came to a place called Geliloth near the Jordan River, the men of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh stopped to build a large and imposing altar. [What happened here? The strict law was that there was only one place of worship. Only one altar to bring sacrifices to. And now they began to erect an imposing altar.]

“The rest of Israel heard that the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh had built an altar at Geliloth at the edge of the land of Canaan, on the west side of the Jordan River. So the whole community of Israel gathered at Shiloh and prepared to go to war against them. [They thought they must be very strict and stop it immediately. Such a thing must not be left unpunished.] First, however, they sent a delegation led by Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, to talk with the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half­tribe of Manasseh. [Israel decided to give them a chance before they went to war.] In this delegation were ten leaders of Israel, one from each of the ten tribes, and each the head of his family within the clans of Israel.

“When they arrived in the land of Gilead, they said to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, ‘The whole community of the Lord demands to know why you are betraying the God of Israel. How could you turn away from the Lord and build an altar for yourselves in rebellion against him? Was our sin at Peor not enough? To this day we are not fully cleansed of it, even after the plague that struck the entire community of the Lord. And yet today you are turning away from following the Lord. If you rebel against the Lord today, he will be angry with all of us tomorrow. [The sin at Peor was when Balaam deceived the people of Israel into the worship of idols. They committed adultery. We know this story. Phinehas was the one who stopped it. He went into the tent of one priest who had boldly transgressed God's law and killed him with a spear. This Phinehas was now the head of the delegation sent to speak with these two and a half tribes. He did some really tough talking to them.]

“If you need the altar because the land you possess is defiled, then join us in the Lord's land, where the Tabernacle of the Lord is situated, and share our land with us. [In other words, Phinehas said to them, “You are not cut off because you are on the other side of the Jordan River. You are welcome to come and be part of us. We don't want to separate from you.”] But do not rebel against the Lord or against us by building an altar other than the one true altar of the Lord our God. Didn't divine anger fall on the entire community of Israel when Achan, a member of the clan of Zerah, sinned by stealing the things set apart for the Lord? He was not the only one who died because of his sin.” *Joshua* 22:9-20.

That was quite a lengthy speech. We don't know how long it was. Not every detail was reported. What is amazing is that the people on the other side of the Jordan, listened. They didn't interrupt. When you let others, who are very angry, talk, and you listen, they usually calm down. But, if you immediately react against their angry words, then you'll get a counter reaction and the situation will escalate. If you give them time to finish, and let their argument have its full weight, then give a reasonable answer, this is the best thing you can do. And that's what they did.

“Then the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered the heads of the clans of Israel: ‘The Lord, the Mighty One, is God! The Lord, the Mighty One, is God! He knows the truth, and may Israel know it, too! We have not built the altar in treacherous rebellion against the Lord. If we have done so, do not spare our lives this day. If we have built an altar for ourselves to turn away from the Lord or to offer burnt offerings or grain offerings or peace offerings, may the Lord himself punish us. [They didn't defend themselves at all. They were fully in agreement with the rest of Israel, and stated that if what they had done was wrong, then they deserved death. That is a noble answer. They focused on the truth.]

“The truth is, we have built this altar because we fear that in the future your descendants will say to ours, ‘What right do you have to worship the Lord, the God of Israel? The Lord has placed the Jordan River as a barrier between our people and you people of Reuben and Gad. You have no claim to the Lord.' So your descendants may prevent our descendants from worshiping the Lord. [What they said, in effect, was that they didn't intend to establish a different worship, but in fact the opposite. They wanted to be connected and stay connected with the rest of Israel. That was the purpose of the altar—to be connected with the center. This purpose was the exact opposite of what the rest of Israel had thought.]

“So we decided to build the altar, not for burnt offerings or sacrifices, but as a memorial. It will remind our descendants and your descendants that we, too, have the right to worship the Lord at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices, and peace offerings. Then your descendants will not be able to say to ours, ‘You have no claim to the Lord.' If they say this, our descendants can reply, ‘Look at this copy of the Lord's altar that our ancestors made. It is not for burnt offerings or sacrifices; it is a reminder of the relationship both of us have with the Lord.' Far be it from us to rebel against the Lord or turn away from him by building our own altar for burnt offerings, grain offerings, or sacrifices. Only the altar of the Lord our God that stands in front of the Tabernacle may be used for that purpose.'” *Joshua* 22:21-29.

Then they made an inscription on their altar, so that all would know and understand that it was not for burnt offerings. It was only to remind the people that there was a center on the other side of the Jordan, where they were to worship. The delegation with Phinehas went back to the rest of Israel with very happy hearts. The situation was the antithesis of what it had looked at first. The law still stood. There was to be only one center. And the two and a half tribes confirmed that center with the altar they had built. It was unavoidable that the people would be dispersed through a larger amount of land. God had given them this land. But, it was still important that they had just one place of worship.

Let's look at another example. The disciples had asked Jesus who was the greatest. Jesus replied by saying that whoever is not like a child will not see the kingdom of God. The disciples became humbler after this. They asked Jesus another question. Let's read about it.

“John said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, we saw someone using your name to cast out demons, but we told him to stop because he wasn't in our group.' [“... he wasn't in our group.” In other words, “He wasn't at the center. He was outside. So, we told him to stop.” The disciples were a little suspicious of the situation after Jesus had spoken about the children. So, they asked Him whether they had been correct. What did Jesus reply? The disciples were probably surprised.] ‘Don't stop him!' Jesus said. ‘No one who performs a miracle in my name will soon be able to speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us. If anyone gives you even a cup of water because you belong to the Messiah, I tell you the truth, that person will surely be rewarded.'” *Mark* 9:38-41.

Jesus said the opposite of what the disciples had in mind. They thought that everyone must be united at one center, because that is gospel order. They were not wrong in this thought. But Jesus said essentially, “The other man is united too. You don't see it, but he is one with us. Don't judge the heart.” The disciples thought that they had the honor of their master in mind. But they really had their own honor in mind. Their idea of a center was to be great and glorious themselves. Jesus had to rebuke that. That was at the foundation of the question, “Who is the greatest?” They thought that they were the greatest. And because they thought they were the greatest, they also thought that everyone must be in their group. Anyone who was not in their group was to be excluded and rejected.

“Anyone who is not against us is for us.” By saying this, Jesus was stating that the man was actually supporting the gospel. He was in fact supporting the purity of faith.

When Jesus sent out the disciples—the twelve and the seventy—they were not in the group at that time either, were they? They went out two by two. Two were in this town, and two were in that town. Imagine if someone had seen them and told them, “You're not in the one group!” What would they have said? They would have replied that Jesus had sent them out. They would have said, “We are with Him. We are just passing on what He told us. That is indeed gospel order.” And it's true. That was also the case with the other man as well. He was sent by Jesus, as Jesus said very clearly. Christ said, “He is supporting the unity of faith. He is supporting the unity of God's people. Don't be mistaken about that. This is the fact of the matter.”

We'll look at some other examples now of people who were inside the group, but yet they were actually outside of it. Let's read a story about this.

“A man named Simon had been a sorcerer there for many years, amazing the people of Samaria and claiming to be someone great. [He claimed to be someone great. That is the root of the problem in having many places of worship. The problem is that people would say, “We are the great ones.” And that is exactly what Simon Magus said. People actually said that about him. But he was pleased when he heard it. He liked it when they said he was great.] Everyone, from the least to the greatest, often spoke of him as ‘the Great One—the Power of God.' [He liked that! But in order to appear to be humble, he would try to play it down. But he really thought he was great. He claimed it in his heart. That is what people who think they are great do. They don't say so publicly. Rather, they usually let others say it, while they themselves appear to be humble. That humility makes them appear even greater.] They listened closely to him because for a long time he had astounded them with his magic. [The magic was his tool. It was what he used to make people say he was great.] But now the people believed Philip's message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, many men and women were baptized. [Now Simon had competition—Philip and the others. They were receiving even more attention than Simon had had before. What would Simon have thought. How would he react? How would a person normally react if another person got more attention than they did? The normal reaction is to respond with hostility. But Simon didn't do that. Let's see how he reacted.] Then Simon himself believed and was baptized. He began following Philip wherever he went, and he was amazed by the signs and great miracles Philip performed.” *Acts* 8:9-13.

It seems as if Simon were converted. He didn't fight against Philip, but rather joined him. But we can't overlook the trick used by people who want to be great. There is a well- known saying, “If you can't beat them, join them.” Simon was clever enough to realize and see immediately that he could not fight against the power which was behind Philip and the church. So, in order to continue to be great, what did Simon need to do? He needed to become like Philip himself. That is what he did. Let's continue reading.

“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted God's message, they sent Peter and John there. As soon as they arrived, they prayed for these new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John laid their hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit. When Simon saw that the Spirit was given when the apostles laid their hands on people, he offered them money to buy this power. ‘Let me have this power, too,' he exclaimed, ‘so that when I lay my hands on people, they will receive the Holy Spirit!' [Now his true spirit came out. It was evident why he had joined. He wanted that power for himself, because he wanted to be the great one. That is the reason. He even offered money for it. He wanted to buy the power, and thought it would be a wonderful deal. It looks as if Simon really wanted to be at the center, doesn't it? But he wasn't at the center in spirit. He was in fact very far away from it. He was erecting his own altar in the various places. That's what he was doing in actuality. This was the case even when he was joining the disciples. So, even when he was in the group, he was still doing his own thing. Peter saw this very clearly.] But Peter replied, ‘May your money be destroyed with you for thinking God's gift can be bought! You can have no part in this, for your heart is not right with God.'” *Acts* 8:14-21.

Simon's problem was that he erected his own altar next to the real sanctuary—like those on the hill tops and under the trees. That is where he brought his own sacrifices— which were actually the same sacrifices as Cain's.

We could also study about Balaam in this context, but we will not do that now in detail. His story can be found in *Numbers* 22. The same principles can be found there. Balaam was a man of God. He understood very well where God's center was. He was faithful to the center until money was offered to him. Money was Simon's problem as well.

When the money was offered to Balaam, he used the sanctuary to enrich and flatter himself. He was very flattered by the many praises that the Moabite King, Balak, gave him. Balaam liked that praise. That was his own altar which he began to establish. It was like the altars on the mountain tops and under the trees—those altars which the Israelites should destroy. Whether it is fame, recognition, or money, it is always the same matter. It is about bringing our sacrifice to the wrong altar.

When we think of the unity which God wanted to establish in Old Testament times, we are reminded of *1 Corinthians* 12 in the New Testament. Unity is described there. The chapter speaks of different gifts which the believers have. But they have one Spirit and one Head, where everything comes together. Let's read this.

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.” *1 Corinthians* 12:4-6.

This brings unity among God's people. It also causes unity with God, as well as harmony with God's laws. And as such, it brings prosperity and happiness to God's people. That is in contrast to selfishness.

Let's now look at a text where Jesus describes what this New Testament center actually is.

“Then Jesus said, ‘Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.'” *Matthew* 11:28­30.

This is the center where we are to worship. This is the New Testament sanctuary. “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. [Don't place your own yoke upon your neck—where you think you'll worship me on this or that mountain, or under this or that tree. No, take my burdens. I will give you rest.] Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

When we come to this center, we will firstly come into harmony with God's law. Secondly, we will come into unity with each other. That is the secret.

Let's turn to a statement where this is nicely described.

“‘Learn of Me,' says Jesus; ‘for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest.' We are to enter the school of Christ, to learn from Him meekness and lowliness. Redemption is that process by which the soul is trained for heaven. This training means a knowledge of Christ. It means emancipation from ideas, habits, and practices that have been gained in the school of the prince of darkness. The soul must be delivered from all that is opposed to loyalty to God.

“In the heart of Christ, where reigned perfect harmony with God, there was perfect peace. He was never elated by applause, nor dejected by censure or disappointment. Amid the greatest opposition and the most cruel treatment, He was still of good courage. But many who profess to be His followers have an anxious, troubled heart, because they are afraid to trust themselves with God. They do not make a complete surrender to Him; for they shrink from the consequences that such a surrender may involve. Unless they do make this surrender, they cannot find peace.” *The Desire of Ages*, 330.2, 3.

The key word here is “surrender.” Unless they make the surrender, they cannot find peace. In other words, we must destroy the other altars. We need to destroy them. We must destroy these altars, wherever they are. We should destroy them and surrender to Christ and His yoke. Then we will find peace. There is harmony with God and with one another in that place. The next paragraph tells us what needs to be destroyed.

“It is the love of self that brings unrest. [It is love of self that leads us to worship in other places.] When we are born from above, the same mind will be in us that was in Jesus, the mind that led Him to humble Himself that we might be saved. Then we shall not be seeking the highest place. We shall desire to sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn of Him. We shall understand that the value of our work does not consist in making a show and noise in the world, and in being active and zealous in our own strength. The value of our work is in proportion to the impartation of the Holy Spirit. Trust in God brings holier qualities of mind, so that in patience we may possess our souls.” *The Desire of Ages*, 330.4.

It is really important to understand the differences between the other places of worship and the one that God has specified. The center of true worship is not when we feel we must give some evidence of how good we are, or act zealously in our own strength. Where is this center? It's where the Holy Spirit is imparted. The question is not how many people did you convert, heal or help. It's not how much you sell or how many you speak to. These are irrelevant. The

question is, how much of the Holy Spirit do you have? That's the crucial point.

Sometimes we wish that things would run more smoothly. We are very burdened by the fact that there are hindrances. We imagine that if only this or that would happen, then things would run smoothly. If only this person would see their line of work. If only the computer would work properly. Sometimes everything that could go wrong, does go wrong. That doesn't matter. The question is how do I react to these circumstances? The impartation of the Spirit is the key point.

This reminds me of when we had the camp meeting here at Dickendorf in 1985. Some of you might remember this. It was raining and raining. So much so, that all the tents were flooded. We could only sit in the meeting tent when we had boards on the ground under our feet because the ground was too soft, and you would sink into the mud. When it was raining too hard, we couldn't have meetings because of the noise on the tent. Of course, we were saddened by these circumstances. However, the neighbor commented that he marveled how we were continuing to hold the camp meeting. What did he look at, the circumstances, or our reaction to the circumstances? He looked at the way we reacted to the conditions. This is the critical point.

How do we compose ourselves in adverse circumstances? It depends on the impartation of the Spirit. The Spirit is the center that God gives. There is one Spirit, one Head. Through this, God wants to unify us. Through this, God really wants to show the world how unity works, and what it will accomplish. Let us all strive to be in that one center, rather than do a great and imposing work in the world. Don't make a lot of show or noise. But take Simon Magus as a serious warning. He wanted to be a great person. Let us seek for the place nearest to the heart of God, the Center, and not for the greatest place in the world. This is the gospel order God has placed on us. Let's pray for this now.