

## 9. ASHEVILLE (1980---I think) STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL FELLOWSHIP

*An Introductory Note:* This series was delivered at the same conference with # 9 and I believe it was at Ben Lippen although by now most of my friends will have given up with attempting to keep account with my dates and places. The series suffered in that when I went to two other conferences that summer I decided to work this one out again. I do not often repeat so I studied the texts and borrowed from one series for the other and today the notes for all three presentations are somewhat jumbled together and I believe I can present here what was basically presented at Skylands but.....I might wander and the good thing is that no one will really know! At any rate I was feeling a concern for the health of our meetings and these talks were to be directed in that way.

One of the more interesting adventures of the week came when Stan Ford, the other speaker, asked me if I would talk a walk with his wife. He said he had heard that I was a horticulturist and his wife was appalled at how many growing plants, trees, etc, were unidentified by the people who lived among them all the time. She told me she could not believe one would have a tree in one's yard and not be able to give it proper botanical identification. I told Stan that I was not a horticulturist but had worked as a tree surgeon.....that the flora of North Carolina was not native to me but that I would be glad to do what I could. We spent a couple of hours walking around the Ben Lippen grounds, she with a note book, and I identified for her what I could...including a few Latin terms just to make it scholarly. At least ten percent of the plants were unknown to me and some we could classify broadly but many not at all. But of the trees I had a near perfect record and with the larger shrubs did well also. The grasses, mosses and little stuff were the hard areas. It was an interesting afternoon and something that has never occurred at any other conference where I have been.

Allow me to say that I was not raised in an assembly fellowship but after I was saved I fell in love with the idea of the church. When in the Army during the Korean War I was stationed in Georgia, I began meeting with the believers at *Bethany Chapel*. No one can know what a blessing it was to me or how much I gained by that association. Later in California I met with the Lord's people in Atascadero and was likewise greatly enriched. In Philadelphia some time later my wife and I worshipped at the Germantown Gospel Hall and through all of these things I have greatly appreciated the assembly concept. My heart is heavy when I hear of a meeting having difficulties or of believers finding the fellowship inferior. So in some ways, in this series my heart was aching for the health of the fellowships and the blessings of worship in which we indulge. Can't say it as well as I would like. We are thankful for all of the Lord's people and we are deeply in debt to those who will simply and only be the Lord's. No further politicizing is needed.