

International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones

April 2022

GENERAL SUBJECT: GOD’S ECONOMY IN FAITH

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GOD'S ECONOMY IN FAITH

(Friday—First Morning Session)

Message One

The Governing and Controlling Vision of God's Economy in Faith

Scripture Reading: Prov. 29:18a; Acts 26:18a; 1 Tim. 1:4; Gal. 2:16, 20

I. We in the Lord's recovery must have a vision of God's economy—Acts 26:18a; Prov. 29:18a:

- A. We need to be brought into another realm, not the so-called spiritual realm but the realm of God's economy—Rev. 21:9-10.
- B. We need to be governed, controlled, and directed by this vision—Prov. 29:18a.
- C. We must be strong and unshakable in the vision of God's economy, God's eternal will—Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 15:58.
- D. If we love the Lord and His recovery and if we mean business to practice the church life in the recovery, we need to endeavor to see all the visions concerning God's economy—Jer. 29:13; 33:3; Deut. 29:29.

II. God's economy is God's household administration, which is to dispense Himself in Christ into His chosen and redeemed people that He may have a house to express Himself, which house is the church, the Body of Christ—1 Tim. 1:4; 3:15:

- A. God's economy, as His household administration, is to produce and constitute a Body for His Son—Eph. 1:22-23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4, 16; 5:30.
- B. The central subject of the Bible is the economy of God, and the entire Bible is concerned with the economy of God—1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 1:10:
 - 1. The governing and controlling vision in the Bible is the divine economy—Prov. 29:18a.
 - 2. In our reading of the Bible, we need to focus our attention on the divine economy for the divine dispensing—Eph. 3:9.
 - 3. Unless we know God's economy, we will not understand the Bible—Luke 24:45.
- C. Christ is the element, sphere, means, goal, and aim of God's eternal economy; He is everything in God's economy—Matt. 17:5; Luke 24:44.
- D. God's economy is to dispense Himself into our being that our being may be constituted with His being; this can be accomplished only by God dispensing Himself into us as the divine life—Eph. 3:16-17a; Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11.
- E. The economy of God is that God became flesh, passed through human living, died, resurrected, and became the life-giving Spirit to enter into us as life and to dispense God into us so that we may be transformed for the producing of the church, which is the Body of Christ, the house of God, the kingdom of God, and the counterpart of Christ, the ultimate aggregate of which is the New Jerusalem—John 1:14, 29; 12:24; 20:22; 14:2; 3:3, 5, 29-30; Rev. 21:2.
- F. God's economy is God becoming man that man may become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead to produce the organic Body of Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem—Rom. 8:3; 1:3-4; 12:4-5; Rev. 21:10.
- G. According to the desire of His heart, God's eternal economy is to make man the same as He is in life and nature but not in the Godhead and to make Himself one with man and man one

with Him, thus to be enlarged and expanded in His expression, that all His divine attributes may be expressed in human virtues—John 1:12-14; 1 John 3:1a, 2; 2 Pet. 1:4.

- H. The divine economy is to produce the new creation out of the chaotic old creation—Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17:
 - 1. The history of the universe is a history of God's economy and Satan's chaos—Gen. 1:1-2, 26; Rev. 20:10—21:4.
 - 2. Both in the Bible and in our experience, the satanic chaos always goes along with the divine economy—Eph. 3:8-10; 4:14-16; 6:24.
 - 3. The Lord needs the overcomers, who will be one with Him to conquer the destructive satanic chaos and to triumph in the constructive divine economy—Rev. 2:7b, 11b, 17b, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21.
- I. The Lord's recovery is for the carrying out of God's economy—Eph. 3:2.

III. God's economy is initiated and developed in the sphere of faith—1 Tim. 1:4:

- A. On the negative side, to exercise faith is to stop our work, our doing; on the positive side, to exercise faith is to trust in the Lord—Heb. 11:6.
- B. Faith is a proclamation that we are unable to fulfill God's requirements but that God has done everything for us and that we receive all God has planned for us, all God has done for us, and all God has given to us—John 1:16.
- C. God's economy is carried out not by our doing in ourselves but by our believing into Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God—3:15-16.
- D. Faith is a matter of seeing a view of the contents of God's economy—Heb. 12:2:
 - 1. Because we have seen a revelation regarding the contents of God's economy, we spontaneously believe in what we see—Eph. 3:9.
 - 2. The ability within us to believe is a product, a result, of having a proper view of God's economy—Heb. 11:6, 9, 23-26; 12:2.
- E. The Christian life is a life of faith, a life of believing—Gal. 3:2, 14:
 - 1. We do not live according to what we see; we live according to what we believe—John 20:25-29.
 - 2. Our walk is by faith, not by sight—2 Cor. 5:7.

IV. Faith is the unique requirement for us to contact God in His economy and the unique way for us to carry out His economy—Gal. 2:16, 20:

- A. Galatians 2:16 says that we are justified through faith in Jesus Christ, literally, faith of Jesus Christ:
 - 1. Faith is related to the believers' appreciation of the person of the Son of God as the most precious One—1 Pet. 2:7.
 - 2. Christ is infusing Himself into us to be the faith in us; He becomes in us the faith by which we believe and the capacity to believe through our appreciation of Him—Gal. 2:16.
 - 3. *Faith in Jesus Christ* denotes an organic union with Him through believing; in this organic union we and Christ are one—John 15:4-5; 1 Cor. 6:17.
 - 4. When we believe in Christ, we enter into Him; we believe ourselves into Christ and thereby become one spirit with Him—John 3:15; 1 Cor. 6:17.
- B. In Galatians 2:20 the apostle Paul says, "I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God":
 - 1. *The faith of the Son of God* refers to the faith of Jesus Christ in us, which becomes the faith by which we believe in Him—vv. 16, 20; 3:22.
 - 2. As we treasure Him, He causes faith to be generated in us, enabling us to believe in Him—Matt. 17:5; Heb. 12:2.
 - 3. According to our Christian experience, the genuine living faith that operates in us is

not only *of* Christ but also *in* Christ—Rom. 3:22, 26; Gal. 2:16, 20:

- a. Paul's thought is that the faith is both of Christ and in Christ—vv. 16, 20.
 - b. Faith is related not only to the Christ who has been infused into us but also to the Christ who is continually infusing Himself into us.
 - c. As Christ operates in us, He becomes our faith; this faith is of Him and also in Him.
4. A secret of experiencing Christ living in us is revealed in the words *in faith*—v. 20:
- a. Paul lived by the faith that is both in and of the Son of God.
 - b. The faith that we need is not only faith in the Son of God but also faith of the Son of God; in and by this faith we can carry out God's economy in faith—v. 20; 1 Tim. 1:4.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE DIVINE ECONOMY

The Arrangement of the Eternal Plan of God's Household Administration

The Mystery of God's Will, a Mystery Which from the Ages Has Been Hidden in God, Who Created All Things

The divine economy is the arrangement of the eternal plan of God's household administration (Eph. 1:9-10; 3:9-11; 1 Tim. 1:3-4). The divine economy is the mystery of God's will, a mystery which from the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things (Eph. 1:9; 3:9). It was a mystery because it was not unveiled to any human being in past ages. Adam and Abraham were never told about God's economy. It was hidden in God; therefore, it was a hidden mystery. Men could see the creation, but they could not understand the purpose of the creation. Today this mystery has been unveiled to us.

According to God's Eternal Purpose Made in Christ to Head Up All Things in Christ

The divine economy is according to God's eternal purpose (v. 11), which He made in Christ to head up all things in Christ (1:10). Today we still cannot see all things headed up in Christ, but we do see this heading up on a small scale. God is heading up the believers of Christ. God's intention is to head up all Christians in Christ to be one. Satan's intention, however, is to divide. Any division, regardless of the reason, must be condemned because division is against God's heading up of all things in Christ.

To Have a Church to Be the Body of Christ as His Fullness for a Corporate Expression of the Processed Triune God

God desires to have a church to be the Body of Christ as His fullness for a corporate expression of the processed Triune God (v. 23; 3:19b). This is not just a congregation composed of a number of believers. The Body of Christ is an organic Body of a great person—Christ. In order for Christ to have such a Body, He must dispense Himself into His chosen and redeemed people.

THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE DIVINE ECONOMY

The Divine Dispensing of the Divine Trinity

The accomplishment of the divine economy is by the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity. God is divine, and He is also triune. He is triune in order to complete the steps for the dispensing of Himself into us. To dispense Himself into us, He has taken three steps: the Father's choosing and predestinating, the Son's redeeming, and the Spirit's sealing. These three steps are for God's divine dispensing.

Through the Father's Choosing and Predestinating

The first step of the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity was the Father's choosing and predestinating (1:4-5). The Father chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy. How can we common human beings be holy? We cannot be made holy by our outward actions. Neither can we be holy by being washed. To be washed makes us clean, but to be clean is not to be holy. The only way that we can be holy is by a holy element being dispensed into our being. Medical doctors know that our physical bodies need many minerals. If our blood is short of iron, the only way that iron can get into our blood is by the food that we eat or drink. In the same way, we become holy by receiving the holy God with His holy nature into our being. His holy element then becomes our element. The Father chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world so that we, the chosen ones, may have the Father's holy nature and thus may be sanctified through the dispensing of the Father's holy nature into us, His chosen ones.

The Father's predestinating through Christ is so that we the predestinated ones may have His life for our sonship through the dispensing of the Father's divine life into us (v. 5). To have the sonship implies that we must have God's life. The divine life generates us to be God's sons. As God's sons, we have God's life, so we have God's sonship. God the Father imparts Himself into our being as our holy nature to make us holy and as our divine life to make us His sons so that we may have the sonship. To be made holy and to receive the sonship are a matter of receiving the divine dispensing. The divine way for us to be made holy and to receive the sonship is by God dispensing Himself into us.

Through the Son's Redeeming

The accomplishment of the divine economy by the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity is not only through the Father's choosing and predestinating but also through the Son's redeeming (v. 7). The Son's redeeming is not just outward and objective. It is not just a matter of Christ shedding His blood in order to redeem us and to cleanse us from our sins. The Son's redeeming is much deeper than this. Through the Son's redeeming, the redeemed are put into Christ. We were put into Christ so that we could be made an inheritance of God with Christ as the element and realm of the divine inheritance (v. 11). We were put into Christ and made an inheritance of God through the dispensing of Christ. It is as if God said, "I have redeemed you and put you into Christ. This Christ will become your element for you to be My inheritance. I do not have any intention to inherit you in your natural being. You are just a sinner. Even though you are redeemed, you are just cleansed. I want to inherit My Son in you. Now you have My Son in you as the element to constitute you into something precious. This will be counted as My inheritance." In order for God to gain such an inheritance, He had to dispense Himself in Christ into our being.

Through the Spirit's Sealing

Ephesians 1 reveals the Father's choosing and predestinating, the Son's redeeming, and the Spirit's sealing (v. 13b). The sealing of the Spirit can be likened to a seal with ink being pressed upon a sheet of paper. The more the ink is applied, the more the paper is saturated and permeated with the ink. Eventually, the entire paper will be sealed, saturated, and permeated with the substance of the ink in the image of the seal. In the same way, the Spirit is saturating and permeating us. The last stanza of *Hymns*, #501 says,

Thy Spirit will me saturate,
Every part will God permeate...

This sealing, permeating, and saturating is going on constantly in the believers. As you are reading this chapter, the Spirit is permeating you. The Spirit as the sealing ink remains wet forever. It never dries. The Spirit's sealing saturates the sealed ones through the dispensing of the sealing ink unto, or for, the day of the redemption of their body (4:30). The redemption of our body is the transfiguration of our

body (Phil. 3:21). Until the transfiguration of our body, the sealing of the Spirit will go on continually to saturate and permeate our entire being.

Issuing In the Church

The issue of the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity through the Father's choosing and predestinating, the Son's redeeming, and the Spirit's sealing is the church (Eph. 1:22b).

Through the Transmission, the Dispensing, of the Resurrected and Ascended Christ

The church as the issue of the divine dispensing is through the transmission, the dispensing, of the resurrected and ascended Christ (vv. 19-22). God's power operated in Christ in raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies. Christ was raised from the dead in Hades to the throne of God in the third heaven. Everything was subjected under His feet, and He was made Head over all things to the church. The word *to* in verse 22 implies a transmission. Whatever God has caused to operate in Christ is transmitted and is being transmitted to the church.

That the Church May Be the Body of Christ for the Corporate Expression of the Processed Triune God

This transmission is so that the church may be the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One who fills all in all, for the corporate expression of the processed Triune God (v. 23). (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1990, vol. 3, "The Divine Dispensing for the Divine Economy," pp. 222-226)

EXPERIENCING AND ENJOYING CHRIST

As the Means of Justification

Under God's New Testament economy we are not to keep the law. On the contrary, we are justified through faith in Christ (Gal. 2:16). Faith in Christ denotes an organic union through believing. The faith in Christ by which we are justified is related to our appreciation of the person of the Son of God. In our preaching of the gospel we must present Christ as a treasure. We need to present Christ as the most precious One to people. The more we describe Him and speak of His preciousness, the more something will be infused into the being of the listeners. This infusion will become their faith, and this faith will cause them to respond to our preaching. In this way they will appreciate the person we present to them. This appreciation is their faith in Christ. Out of their appreciation for the Lord Jesus, they will want to possess Him. The Christ who has been preached to them will become in them the faith by which they believe. Faith is Christ preached into them to become their capacity to believe through their appreciation of Him.

The genuine experiential definition of faith is the preciousness of Jesus infused into us. Through such an infusion, we spontaneously have faith in the Lord Jesus. This definition of faith matches our experience. The teaching of doctrine did not impress us with the preciousness of the person of the Son of God. But one day we heard a living message filled with the preciousness of Christ. When His preciousness was infused into us through the preaching of the gospel, we spontaneously began to appreciate the Lord Jesus and believe in Him. We said, "Lord Jesus, I love You. I treasure You." This is what it means to have faith in Christ.

This faith creates an organic union in which we and Christ are one. Therefore, the expression *out of faith in Christ* actually denotes an organic union accomplished by believing in Christ. The term *in Christ* refers to this organic union. Before we believed in Christ, there was a great separation between us and Christ. We were we, and Christ was Christ. But through believing we were joined to Christ and became one with Him. Now we are in Christ, and Christ is in us.

This is an organic union, a union in life. This union is illustrated by the grafting of a branch of one tree into another tree. Through faith in Christ we are grafted into Christ. Through this process of

spiritual grafting, two lives are grafted and become one.

Many Christians have a shallow understanding of justification by faith. How could Christ be our righteousness if we were not organically united to Him? It is by means of our organic union with Christ that God can reckon Christ as our righteousness. Because we and Christ are one, whatever belongs to Him is ours. This is the basis upon which God counts Christ as our righteousness.

Just as a poor woman is united in marriage to a wealthy man and thus participates in the wealth of her husband, through our organic union with Christ, we share whatever Christ is and has. As soon as this union takes place, in the eyes of God Christ becomes us, and we become one with Him. Only in this way can we be justified before God.

Many Christians have a mere doctrinal understanding of justification by faith. According to their concept, Christ is the just One, the righteous One on the throne in the presence of God. When we believe in Christ, God reckons Christ to be our righteousness. This understanding of justification is very shallow. In order to be justified by faith in Christ, we need to believe in the Lord Jesus out of an appreciation of His preciousness. As Christ's preciousness is infused into us through the preaching of the gospel, we spontaneously appreciate the Lord and call on Him. This is genuine believing. Through such a believing, we and Christ become one. Therefore, God must reckon Him as our righteousness.

When we heard the gospel, we began to sense the Lord's preciousness. This gave rise to the living faith that joined us to Christ organically. From that time onward, Christ and we became one in life and in reality. Therefore, justification by faith is not merely a matter of position. It is also an organic matter, a matter in life. The organic union with Christ is accomplished spontaneously through the living faith produced by our appreciation of Him. This is to be justified through faith in Christ. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 3272-3274)

The One Who Has Given Himself Up for the Believers and Lives in Them

Through Their Faith in Him

In Galatians 2:20 Paul declares, "I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God." Here the expression *the Son of God* denotes Christ's person, which is for the impartation of God's life into us. Hence, the faith in which we live God's life is in the Son of God, the life-imparting One. The Son of God loved us and purposely gave Himself up for us that He might impart the divine life into us. The life which we now live in the flesh is not *bios*, the physical life, or *psuche*, the soulish life, but *zoe*, the spiritual and divine life. In contrast to the way we live the physical and soulish life, we live the divine life not by sight or by feeling. The divine life, the spiritual life in our spirit, is lived by the exercise of faith, which is stimulated by the presence of the life-giving Spirit.

One secret of experiencing Christ living in us is revealed in a phrase in Galatians 2:20— *in faith*. Paul did not live by his own faith; he lived by the faith that is both in and of the Son of God. This indicates that we need to live by a certain kind of faith. However, this faith is not something that we ourselves have. Rather, it is the faith of the Son of God. What we need is not only faith that is in Christ but also faith that is of Christ. The faith is His, not ours, but we can be in this faith.

In speaking of faith, Paul refers to "the faith of the Son of God." This expression implies that the faith mentioned in this verse is the faith of the Son of God, the faith which He Himself possesses. However, this phrase also means faith *in* the Son of God.

Paul wrote the book of Galatians both according to truth and according to his experience. According to our Christian experience, the genuine living faith which operates in us is not only *of* Christ but also *in* Christ. Hence, Paul's meaning here actually is "the faith of and in Christ." Paul's thought is that the faith is both of Christ and in Christ.

We have pointed out that faith is our appreciation of what the Lord is and what He has done for us and that genuine faith is Christ Himself infused into us to become our ability to believe in Him. After the Lord has been infused into us, He spontaneously becomes our faith. On the one hand, this faith is *of* Christ; on the other hand, it is *in* Christ. This faith is Christ revealed to us and infused into us. Faith is

related not only to the Christ who has been infused into us but also to the Christ who is continually infusing Himself into us. As Christ operates in us, He becomes our faith. This faith is of Him and also in Him. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 3280-3281)

GOD'S ECONOMY IN FAITH

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two

The Intrinsic Significance of Faith

Scripture Reading: Heb. 11:1, 5-6; 3:7-8a, 12-13, 15a; 4:7

I. Faith is the substantiation of God's facts:

- A. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen"; the word *substantiation* means the capacity to make something real (colors are substantiated by our eyes, sounds by our ears, etc.); thus, it is one thing for objects to exist, and it is another thing for these things to be substantiated.
- B. All of God's facts recorded in the Bible are real; however, these facts can be substantiated only by faith, because faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
- C. We need faith to substantiate a spiritual, divine fact, just as we need eyes, ears, and hands to substantiate physical objects; faith is not a mental understanding of a truth; it is the seeing of a divine fact and the substantiation of it; the accomplished facts of Christ's person, living, and work must be substantiated by us; that is, they must be made real to us.
- D. Believing is exercising our spirit of faith (2 Cor. 4:13) to substantiate the divine facts; once we believe by saying Amen to God's word, we substantiate the divine facts, and we have them; Amen does not mean a wish for something to be accomplished, but a declaration that it will surely be accomplished, and that there is no doubt about it; when we believe, we are accepting what the Lord has already promised to do.

II. Faith is the substantiation of the substance of the truth (Heb. 11:1), which is the reality of the contents of God's New Testament economy:

- A. Such a faith is allotted to all the believers in Christ as their portion, which is equally precious to all who have received it—2 Pet. 1:1; cf. Col. 1:12.
- B. As such a portion from God, this faith is objective to us in the divine truth, but it brings all the contents of its substantiation into us, thus making them all, with itself (faith), subjective to us in our experience.
- C. It is like the scenery (truth) and the seeing (faith) being objective to the camera (us); but when the light (the Spirit) brings the scenery to the film (our spirit) within the camera, both the seeing and the scenery become subjective to the camera.

III. Faith means that we believe that God is and we are not—Heb. 11:5-6, 1-2; 2 Cor. 4:13, 18:

- A. Without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to God, to make God happy—Heb. 11:6a.
- B. To believe that God is, is to believe that He is everything to us and that we are nothing—John 8:58; Eccl. 1:2.
- C. To believe that God is implies that we are not; He must be the only One, the unique One, in everything, and we must be nothing in everything—Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5.
- D. To believe that God is, is to deny our self; in the whole universe He is, and all of us are nothing—Luke 9:23.
- E. I should not be anything; I should not exist; only He should exist—"it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ"—Gal. 2:20.
- F. Before Enoch's translation, he obtained the testimony that he had been well pleasing to God (Heb. 11:5-6); Enoch continually walked upward with God day and night for three centuries,

exercising his faith to believe that God is, becoming closer to God and more one with God each day until “he was not, for God took him”—Gen. 5:22-24; cf. S. S. 8:5a.

IV. Faith means that we believe that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him—Heb. 11:6; Gen. 15:1; Phil. 3:8, 14:

- A. Enoch’s reward was the highest degree of life—escape from death—Heb. 11:5a; 2 Cor. 5:4; Rom. 8:6, 10-11; 5:17.
- B. The Lord is a rewarder, and we need to be His seekers—Psa. 27:4, 8; 42:1-2; 43:4; 73:25; 119:2, 10.
- C. We are those who live by faith, looking away to the reward of the uttermost enjoyment of Christ in the millennial kingdom and, like Moses, persevering as one seeing the unseen One—Phil. 3:14; Heb. 11:26-27.

V. Faith is rooted in God’s great, eternal, and divine facts covenanted to us in His holy Word; the believers’ subjective faith is in their spirit, which makes their mingled spirit a spirit of faith—2 Cor. 4:13 and footnote 2:

- A. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe in the fact that God is love—1 John 4:8.
- B. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe in the fact that God’s grace is sufficient—2 Cor. 12:9.
- C. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe in the fact that Christ is able to save us to the uttermost—Heb. 7:25.
- D. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe in the fact that we are in Christ, that Christ is in us, and that we and Christ are one—1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:27; John 14:20; 15:5.
- E. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe in the fact that we are God’s children and heirs—Rom. 8:16-17.
- F. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe in the fact that we have been made full in Christ—Col. 2:10.
- G. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe in the fact that we are the temple of the living God and that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within us—1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16.
- H. We withstand the devil by being firm in our subjective faith in God’s protecting power and loving concern—1 Pet. 5:8-9:
 - 1. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe that the Lord was manifested for the purpose of destroying the works of the devil—1 John 3:8.
 - 2. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe that the Lord’s death has destroyed him who has the might of death, the devil—Heb. 2:14.
 - 3. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe that the Lord’s resurrection has put Satan to shame; the resurrection life is a life that cannot be touched by death, that transcends death, that is beyond the boundary of death, that comes out of death, and that death cannot hold—Acts 2:23-24; Phil. 3:10; Col. 2:12-15, 20; 3:1; John 14:30.
 - 4. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe that the ascension of the Lord has put Him far above the power of Satan—Eph. 1:20-22; 2:6; 6:11, 13.
 - 5. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe that the victory of the Lord is complete and that our whole life is included in this victory; we must see that we have already overcome and that we fight from a position of victory in order to maintain our victory; we can overcome because we are all included in the Lord as the leading Overcomer; He is the Head, center, reality, life, and nature of the man-child, and the man-child as the following overcomers is the Lord’s Body—Rev. 3:21; 12:5.

VI. All our spiritual possessions in Christ are realized and actualized by faith:

- A. Faith opens the door to every blessing that is ours in Christ—2 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 1:3.
- B. Faith cuts off the flesh with its natural energy and effort and gives us access into God's grace and a solid standing in grace, which is the Triune God processed so that we may enter into Him and enjoy Him—Rom. 5:2.
- C. We are all "sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus"—Gal. 3:26.
- D. The righteousness that is God Himself lived out of us is through faith in Christ; Christ Himself infused into us through our appreciation of Him becomes our faith, the faith of Christ that brings us into an organic union with Him—Phil. 3:9.
- E. We are sanctified dispositionally, which is to be saturated with God as our possession for our enjoyment today and to be transformed by and with the holy nature of God—Acts 26:18; Rom. 6:19, 22; 2 Cor. 3:18.
- F. The inward cleansing of man's heart can be accomplished only by the Holy Spirit with the divine life by faith.
- G. Christ makes His home deep down in our hearts through faith; Christ's indwelling is mysterious and abstract, and we apprehend it not by our physical senses but by the sense of faith—Eph. 3:17.
- H. At the time of our regeneration, we believed into Christ and received the Spirit by faith as the ultimate blessing of the gospel; after this, God is supplying the Spirit to us continually, and our receiving the Spirit is a lifelong, continuous matter by the hearing of faith—Gal. 3:2-5, 14.
- I. We are inheriting the promises of God through faith—Heb. 6:12.
- J. We have victory over the world through faith, by which we are enabled to overcome the Satan-organized-and-usurped world.
- K. We have victory over the evil one by taking up the shield of faith, which is able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one, which are Satan's temptations, proposals, doubts, questions, lies, and attacks—Eph. 6:16.
- L. Through faith we are able to overcome in the midst of all our circumstances of suffering and difficulties—Heb. 11:33-34.
- M. We are kept by the power of God through faith, and we have power through faith—1 Pet. 1:5; Matt. 17:19-20; 21:21-22.

VII. "Beware, brothers, lest perhaps there be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from the living God. But exhort one another each day, as long as it is called 'today,' lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin... 'Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts'"—Heb. 3:12-13, 15a:

- A. *Falling away* also means "turning away"; when we exercise our spirit of faith and keep our heart turned to the Lord, the veil is taken away, and we can behold Him as the God of glory with an unveiled face, so that we may be continually transfused with Him, with His believing element, so that we can live by Him as our faith and remain in the process of being transformed from one degree of glory to another degree of glory into the same image of the resurrected and glorified Christ—2 Cor. 4:13; 3:16-18; cf. Gen. 1:26; Isa. 43:7.
- B. We need to see that unbelief is the greatest sin; we are believers who walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7); a believer is one who does not trust in things that can be seen, but he takes certain unseen things, confesses them, and realizes them by faith.
- C. We overcome the devil, the accuser of the brothers, by our declaration of the divine facts, which is the word of our testimony (Rev. 12:10-11); we follow the Lord as the One who confronted the enemy not by His own word but by repeatedly saying, "It is written..."—Matt. 4:4, 7, 10.

- D. We should not believe in our feelings but believe in the divine facts in God's holy Word; we must learn to declare the divine, mystical, and eternal facts of what the Lord has done, is doing, and will do in us, for us, and through us for the accomplishment of His eternal economy; when God says a certain thing, we should also speak that thing simply because the Bible tells us so.

VIII. As people of faith, we are people of “today”; the first point of the up-to-date way to practice the Lord's present move is to be filled with the Spirit inwardly and outwardly, essentially and economically, for our life and our work “today”—Acts 2:4; 13:52; Heb. 3:7-8a, 13, 15; 4:7:

“Forget about yesterday's enjoyment of Christ. You need a fresh enjoyment. You need something up to date. The Lord was there in Elden hall, but He is not there now. He is here presently moving in His recovery, and He is in you. Wherever you are, He is in you, and He is in you right now. Do you believe He is repeating all the things He did in the past? He is not repeating anything. He is always going on and on and on. The Lord is working. He is moving.

“Are you a person of yesterday? All of us should be people of today. Every day is a today. With some people every day is tomorrow, and with others every day is yesterday...Do not look ahead to the future, and do not look back to the past. We are people of today. Do not talk about your old experiences in the past. Talk about your experience today...Every day is a today. We do not have yesterday. We had yesterday, but we do not have it now. We will never have tomorrow. All the time we have is today. Every day is a today. When we enter into the New Jerusalem, we will have today since every day in eternity is today. The only day we have is today. Be filled inwardly [with the Spirit] today. Be filled outwardly [with the Spirit] today. Be filled today” (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1985, vol. 5, “The Way to Practice the Lord's Present Move,” pp. 484-485).

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BELIEVERS' FAITH

He Who Comes Forward to God Must Believe That God Is

He who comes forward to God must believe that God is (Heb. 11:6b). This is very simple. God requires you only to believe that He is. The verb *to be* is actually the divine title of our Triune God. In Exodus 3 Moses asked God what His name was. God answered that His name is I Am Who I Am (vv. 13-14). Our God's name is the verb *to be*. He is I Am Who I Am. He is the only One.

Thus, when Jesus came, He declared that He was the I Am three times in John 8. He told the unbelieving Pharisees, “Unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins” (v. 24). He also said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am” (v. 28). At the end of the chapter, the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” (v. 57). Jesus responded, “Truly, truly, I say to you, Before Abraham came into being, I am” (v. 58). According to grammar, this is the wrong tense. The Lord should have said, “Before Abraham came into being, I was.” But the Lord said that He is the I Am, indicating that He is the very Jehovah. This is why Paul says in Hebrews 11:6, “He who comes forward to God must believe that He is.” God is always, eternally, in the present tense.

Revelation 1:4 and 5 say, “John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth.” In these verses we see the three of the Divine Trinity. God the Father is called by John in Revelation 1:4 “Him who is and who was and who is coming.” The One who is coming is the One who will be. This means that in the whole universe, nothing else is. Only One is. He is, because He is real. All other things created by Him are not real. This is why Solomon, the wise king, said that all things are

vanity (Eccl. 1:2). You think you are, but you are vanity. Everything is vanity. The sun, the moon, the living creatures, the heavens, and the earth are all vanities. Only One is. This *is*, the verb *to be*, implies existing. He is the One who was existing, who is existing, and who is to be existing. No human language can adequately express what this title *I Am* means.

Paul says that he who comes forward to God must believe that God is. A Chinese version says that when you come forward to God, you must believe that there is God. This is too shallow. The English translation is very good because it is equivalent to the Greek—we must believe that God is. This implies everything. Do you need God? God is. Do you need food? God is. This is why we use the word *great* in saying that Jesus is the great I Am. He told us, “I am...the life” (John 14:6a). “I am the resurrection” (11:25). “I am the door” (10:7, 9). “I am the good Shepherd” (v. 11). “I am the bread of life” (6:35). He is the real food. There is only one kind of food that is. This food is Jesus, the great I Am. He is the breath (20:22), the living water (4:10, 14), and the tree of life (15:1; 14:6a; Rev. 2:7). He is God (John 1:1; 20:28-29; Rom. 9:5), the Father (Isa. 9:6; John 14:9-10), the Son (Mark 1:1; John 20:31), and the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 15:45b). He is everything to us.

The Bible says that if you do not believe in Christ, you have no life (John 3:15-16, 36). When I was young, I could not understand this. I thought that as a strong boy, I did have life. Later, I realized that our life is a false one. It is not the life that is. This means that our life is not something that exists forever. We are today, but eventually, we will not be tomorrow. So in the whole universe we are nothing. I am nothing, our hall is nothing, Anaheim is nothing, California is nothing, the United States is nothing, and the whole globe is nothing! This is because they do not exist forever. The day will come when they will not exist; they will be over. Actually, the things that are seen are not the things that exist; they are vanities (2 Cor. 4:18).

Then what is existing? Who exists? Only the great I Am—I Am Who I Am. He who comes forward to God must believe that God is. Faith is so critical. Without this, you can never make God happy. You must believe that God is. Let me illustrate. If a husband realized that only God is and he is not, then he would not love his wife by himself and in himself. Sisters, when you go shopping, if you realized that in the whole universe only God is, would you buy anything you want? You would realize, “I am not. I am nothing. I don’t go shopping, but He is, so He goes.”

What is faith? Faith is to stop yourself from doing anything. You are nothing. Faith joins you with God to make God the only One who is. I am not, so I should not be the one who loves my wife. It should be Christ loving my wife. He is; I am not. I should not be the one to go shopping. He should be the One. When you pick up something on sale in the department store, you have to check, “He is, or I am?”

Faith is to stop you from doing anything but to make God everything to you. This equals Paul’s word in Galatians 2:20: “I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” Who lives? It is no longer I. I do not exist. I was terminated. I was crucified. I am finished. It is no more I, but it is Christ who lives in me. Christ lives. Christ is. Christ exists. I do not exist. This is the very essence of the short phrase *believe that He is*. To believe that God is implies that you are not. He must be the only One, the unique One, in everything, and we must be nothing in everything.

The brothers need to ask themselves, “Is it me or Christ who is the husband to my wife?” If a sister has a husband who does not take Christ as the One who is, she will be miserable. But if her husband is Christ, she has the only Husband, the unique Husband. Only Christ is the Husband. No husbands are real husbands. They are all vanity. Do you come forward to God? If you say yes, then you have to believe that God is, implying that you are nothing. You are finished.

It would be good to speak a word like this at a wedding. The person marrying a couple could say to them, “Are you the dear bride, and are you the dear bridegroom?” The bridegroom should say, “No. I am not. But Christ is.” The bride should say, “I am not the bride. I am so ugly and poor. I am not pretty. Christ is the beautiful One. I am not the bride, but He is.” This is a believer.

When you say what Paul said, “It’s no longer I, but Christ,” you believe that God is. To believe that God is, is so deep. It implies that you realize that you are not, but He is. *You are not* means that you do not exist. This is what the Bible means when it says to deny yourself. When a sister is about to be married, she needs to realize that she is nothing. She should not feel that she is the most beautiful and wonderful one. If she does, her marriage will be finished. That is not a believer’s marriage. A believer who is about to be married should say, “Lord, I am going to marry this man. Lord, You know I am nothing. I cannot be the proper wife. I am nothing, Lord.” What a blessing this is! This is the blessing of denying yourself in everything.

The Lord Jesus said, “If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself” (Luke 9:23). This word is the same as what Paul said: “He who comes forward to God must believe that He is.” To deny yourself equals to believe that God is, and to believe that God is equals to deny yourself. This is because you believe that only He is. In the whole universe He is, and all of us are nothing. I should not be anything. I should not exist. Only He should be everything. Only He should exist. So Paul says, “I have been crucified. It is no longer I, but Christ.”

When the apostle Paul was Saul, he was a very aggressive young man. Everything with him was “I, me, my, and mine.” With Saul it was “I first, my and mine in the middle, and me last.” Everything was Saul of Tarsus. But the Lord Jesus knocked him down on the road to Damascus, and Saul asked, “Who are You, Lord?” (Acts 9:5). The Lord said, “I am Jesus” (v. 5). The Lord was saying, “I am the great I Am. I am the One who is. You must believe that I am and you are not.” Eventually, Saul changed his name. Saul was over, and Paul came up (13:9 and footnote 1, Recovery Version). This Paul was the one who told us, “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” This is to believe that God is.

Nothing can make the unique God happy except one thing. That is faith. Faith is to believe that God is. Then I would check with you, “If only God is, where are you?” The first stanza of *Hymns*, #483 says, “Buried with Christ, and raised with Him too; / What is there left for me to do? / Simply to cease from struggling and strife, / Simply to walk in newness of life. / Glory be to God!” Where are you? You are in the tomb. Today who are you? You need to say, “It is no longer I, but Christ.” I would like again to refer to what Darby said: “O the joy of having nothing and being nothing, seeing nothing but a living Christ in glory, and being careful for nothing but His interests down here.” This is faith. We care for nothing but His interest. We should always say, “Not I, not me, not my, not mine; but He, Him, His. He is the first and the last and everything in between.” “Christ, only Christ” (see *Hymns*, #591— stanza 5).

Why did John write the book of Revelation and declare, “Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming” (1:4)? This was because the degraded church had become too much. The biggest religious society on this earth is the Catholic Church. They use the term *the Church*, which refers to the pope. They do not say, “Christ says...” Instead, they say, “The pope says...” Whatever the pope says is what they do. But it should be no more the Catholic Church, no more the pope, but Christ. This is to believe that God is, and this is the faith of the believers.

Only faith can make God happy, and faith is to believe that God is. It is not I, but Christ. To believe that God is, is the only way, the unique way, to make God happy, to please God. I would like to ask the sisters, “When you are combing your hair, who is combing it?” While you are combing your hair, you should say, “No longer I, but Christ.” But with many sisters it is not Christ, but them. If Christ were doing the combing, He would not comb your hair according to your way. You have to remember this. When you comb your hair, you should be able to say, “Praise the Lord. It is no longer I, but Christ.” You and I have to do everything in this way.

When brothers come to visit me, quite often I pray, “Lord, the brothers are coming to see me. I am not the one who can meet their need. Lord, You are the One.” This is faith—believing that I should be out and believing that He should be in. I must deny myself in everything and trust in Him in everything. To deny yourself and to trust in Him is faith. This is to believe that God is.

Even at the end of a ministry meeting, we may say, “Saints, now it is your turn to share.” But we

have to say, “It is not our turn, but Christ’s turn.” If we live in this way, the riches of Christ will come out of our mouth. Quite often before coming to a meeting, I pray to the Lord, “Lord, I should not be the speaker, but You. I have been crucified, but You live in me. You should be the speaker.” This makes a big difference—to deny the self, to trust in the Lord, that is, to believe that God is. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1994–1997*, vol. 1, “Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans,” pp. 276-281)

WITHSTANDING SATAN BY FAITH

First Peter 5:8-9 says, “Be sober; watch. Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking someone to devour. Him withstand, being firm in your faith.” God’s Word shows us clearly that the way to withstand Satan is by faith. There is no other way to withstand him. What should our faith rest on? How should we exercise our faith to withstand him? Let us consider what the Word of God says concerning this.

Believing That the Lord’s Manifestation Is to Destroy the Works of the Devil

First, we must believe that the Lord was manifested for the purpose of destroying the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). The Son of God has come to the earth; He was manifested. When He was on earth, He destroyed the work of the devil wherever He went. Often Satan’s work was not obvious; he hid behind natural phenomena. However, the Lord rebuked him every time. It is clear that He was rebuking Satan when He rebuked Peter’s speaking (Matt. 16:22-23), when He rebuked the fever of Peter’s mother-in-law (Luke 4:39), and when He rebuked the winds and the waves. Although the devil hid behind many natural phenomena, the Lord Jesus rebuked him. Wherever the Lord went, the power of the devil was shattered. This is why He said, “But if I, by the Spirit of God, cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:28). In other words, wherever the Lord went, Satan was cast out, and the kingdom of God was manifested. Satan could not remain where the Lord was. This is why He said that He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil.

We should also believe that in manifesting Himself on the earth, the Lord not only destroyed the works of the devil but also gave authority to His disciples to cast out demons in His name. The Lord said, “Behold, I have given you the authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19). He gave His name to the church so that His church might continue His work on earth after His ascension. The Lord used His authority on earth to cast out demons. He also gave this authority to the church.

We must distinguish between what the devil has and what we have. What the devil has is power. What we have is authority. All that Satan has is power. But the Lord Jesus has given us authority, which can overcome all the power of Satan. Power cannot prevail over authority. God has given us authority, and Satan will surely fail.

Consider an illustration of how authority overcomes power: A traffic light on a road controls traffic. When a policeman turns on the red light, all pedestrians and cars have to stop. No one is allowed to dash through a red light. The pedestrians and cars are much more powerful than the red light in terms of power. However, no pedestrian or driver will dare dash through the red light because of the presence of authority. This is an example of authority prevailing over power.

Authority prevails over power; this is God’s established policy in this universe. No matter how strong Satan’s power is, one fact remains sure—the Lord Jesus has given His name to the church. This name stands for authority. The church can cast out demons in the name of the Lord. We can invoke the Lord’s name to deal with Satan’s power. Thank God that no matter how great Satan’s power is, the Lord’s name is immeasurably greater. The authority behind the Lord’s name is strong enough to overcome all the power of Satan.

The disciples went out in the name of the Lord. They were surprised when they returned. They

told the Lord, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name" (10:17). The Lord's name spells authority. His giving of His name to us means that He has given His authority to us. The Lord said, "Behold, I have given you the authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (v. 19). Whoever desires to withstand Satan must learn to know the difference between the Lord's authority and Satan's power. No matter how great Satan's power is, the Lord's authority is able to overcome him. We must believe that God has given this authority to the church. The church can cast out demons and withstand the devil in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Believing That the Lord's Death Has Destroyed Satan

Second, we must believe that through death the Lord Jesus has destroyed him who has the might of death, the devil (Heb. 2:14). The manifestation of the Lord Jesus destroyed the works of the devil, and the death of the Lord Jesus destroyed the devil himself.

The Lord's death pronounces the greatest defeat for the devil because the Lord's death is not only a punishment but also a way of salvation. In Genesis 2:17 God spoke of death: "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This death is surely a punishment. Satan was delighted at this word. Since man would die if he ate the fruit, Satan tried his best to seduce man to eat it, so that death would reign in man and he could claim the victory. However, the Lord's death constitutes the greatest way of salvation. It is true that God said, "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This death is punishment. But the Lord has another death. The second death is a way of salvation. Death can punish those who sin. Death can also save and deliver those who are in sin. Satan thought that death could only punish the sinner. He seized upon this fact and reigned through man's death. However, God saves and delivers man from sin through the death of the Lord Jesus. This is the most profound aspect of the gospel.

The Lord's death on the cross takes away not only our sins but also the whole old creation. Our old man has been crucified with Him. Although Satan reigns through death, the more he reigns through death, the worse his lot becomes, because his reign stops at death. Since we are already dead, death can no longer sting us. He has no further reign over us.

"For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." God said this so that man would not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But man ate it and sinned. What then should be done? The result of sin is death; there is no way to change this. However, there is a way to salvation, a salvation which goes through death. When the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross for us, the old creation and the old man were both crucified with Him. This means that Satan's authority can only go as far as death. The Scripture says, "Through death He might destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14).

Thank and praise the Lord. We are those who are already dead. If Satan attacks us, we can say to him, "I am already dead!" He has no authority over us because we are already dead. His authority extends only to the point of death.

Our crucifixion with Christ is an accomplished fact; it is God's doing. The Bible does not say that our death with the Lord is something that belongs to the future. It is not some experience that we hope to attain one day. The Bible does not tell us to pursue death. It shows us that we are already dead. A person is not dead if he is still pursuing death. However, our death with Christ is a gift from God in the same way that His death for us is a gift. If a man is still pursuing crucifixion, he is standing on fleshly ground, and Satan has full control over those who stand on fleshly ground. We must believe in the Lord's death. We must also believe in our own death. Just as we believed in the Lord's death for us, so also we should believe in our death in Him. Both are acts of faith, and neither has anything to do with human pursuits. As soon as we strive to realize these facts, we expose ourselves to Satan's attack. We have to lay hold of the accomplished facts and declare: "Praise and thank the Lord; I am already dead."

We must see that, in the eyes of God, our death with Christ is an accomplished fact. Once we see

this, Satan can no longer do anything with us. Satan can deal only with those who are not dead. He can rule over only those who are facing death and who are on their way to death. But we are no longer facing death; we have already died. Satan can do nothing about us.

In order to withstand Satan, we must realize that the Lord's manifestation was a manifestation of authority, and the work of His cross has released all those who are under Satan's hand. Satan no longer has any authority over us anymore. We are above him. We are those who are already dead. Satan's way is terminated by death, and there is nothing more that he can do.

Believing That the Lord's Resurrection Has Put Satan to Shame

Third, we must believe that the Lord's resurrection has put Satan to shame. Satan no longer has any way to attack us.

Colossians 2:12 says, "Buried together with Him in baptism, in which also you were raised together with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who raised Him from the dead." This verse speaks of death as well as resurrection. Verse 13 tells us how we died and resurrected; verse 14 tells us what the Lord did at the time of His death; and verse 15 says that the Lord Jesus stripped off the rulers and the authorities and "made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Verse 20 says, "If you died with Christ," and 3:1 says, "If therefore you were raised together with Christ." These verses begin with resurrection and end with resurrection, and the verses in between speak of triumphing in the cross. We stand in the position of resurrection, and we triumph in the cross.

Why can we do this? The statement we made earlier explains this: The Lord has died, and we also are dead in Him. Satan, who has dominion over the old man, can follow us only as far as the cross. Resurrection is beyond him. Just as Satan had nothing in the Lord Jesus while He was on earth (John 14:30), so also he has nothing in Him in resurrection. Satan has no place at all in the new life. He has no authority at all in the new life and cannot touch our new life!

When the Lord was hung on the cross, it seemed as if myriads of demons were surrounding it. They thought that they could destroy the Son of God. It was to have been their greatest victory. Little did they realize that the Lord Jesus would go into death, come out of death, and overcome the authority of death! Here is the glorious fact: The Lord has come out of death! Therefore, we have the boldness and the confidence to say that the life of God is well able to cast away death!

What is the resurrection life? The resurrection life is a life that cannot be touched by death. It is a life that transcends death, that is beyond the boundary of death, that comes out of death, and that death cannot hold. Satan's power extends only as far as death. The Lord Jesus proved how great the power of His life is through His resurrection. He dismantled the power of Satan. The Bible calls this power "the power of His resurrection" (Phil. 3:10). When this resurrection power is expressed through us, everything of Satan is cast down!

We can withstand Satan because our life is a life of resurrection. This life has nothing to do with Satan. Our life issues from the life of God; it is a life that comes out of death. Satan's power only goes as far as death. Whatever it does to us is limited to this side of death. But our life has come out of death. We have a life which he cannot touch. We are standing on resurrection ground, and we look back in triumph through the cross. Colossians 2 speaks of triumphing in resurrection. It is a chapter on resurrection, not death. We do not triumph in death through resurrection; rather we triumph in resurrection through death.

In order to withstand Satan, every child of God must declare with a strong faith, "Thank God, I have resurrected! Satan, what can you do? What you can do goes only so far as death. But the life that I have today has nothing to do with you! This life has been tested by you already. What else can you do? You are powerless! This life has transcended over you! Satan, get away from me!"

We cannot deal with Satan on the ground of hope. We can only stand on the ground of resurrection, the ground of the Lord. This is a very basic principle. Colossians 2:12 tells us that we must believe in "the operation of God, who raised Him from the dead."

We need to take the same position before Satan as that which we take before God. The Bible tells us to put on the robe of righteousness when we come before God (Isa. 61:10; Zech. 3:4-5). Our robe of righteousness is Christ. We need to put on Christ to come before God. In the same way, we need to put on Christ to come before Satan. God cannot find our sins when we put on Christ. Likewise, Satan cannot find our sins when we are in Christ. When we take this stand, Satan can no longer attack us. We are perfect before God and perfect also before Satan. What a glorious fact!

We must not be afraid of Satan. If we are afraid of Satan, he will laugh at us. He will say, "What a fool there is on earth. How can this one be so foolish?" Anyone who is afraid of Satan is foolish, because he has forgotten his position in Christ. We have no reason to fear him. We have transcended over his power. We can stand before him and say, "You cannot touch me! No matter how strong and resourceful you are, you are still one step behind!" On the day of the Lord's resurrection, He led the enemy captive and openly shamed him. Today we are standing on the ground of resurrection, and we triumph through the cross!

Believing That the Ascension of the Lord Is Far above the Power of Satan

Fourth, we must believe that the ascension of the Lord has put Him far above the power of Satan. Ephesians 1:20-22 says, "Raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies, far above all...not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church." This means that the Lord Jesus is already seated in the heavenlies and is far above all the power of Satan.

Ephesians 2:6 says, "And raised us up together with Him and seated us together with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." This is our position, the position of a Christian. The Lord Jesus is resurrected; He is seated in the heavenlies far above all the power of Satan. We are raised up together with Christ and are seated together with Him in the heavenlies, far above all the power of Satan.

Ephesians 6:11 and 13 say, "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil...and having done all, to stand." Chapter two shows us that we are seated together with the Lord in the heavenlies. Chapter six shows us that we need to stand firm. Chapter two says that we need to sit, while chapter six says that we need to stand. What does it mean to sit? To sit means to rest. It means that the Lord has overcome and that we can now rest in His victory. This is what it means to depend on the Lord's victory. What does it mean to stand? To stand means that spiritual warfare is not a matter of assault but of defense. To stand does not mean to attack; it means to defend. Because the Lord has overcome completely, we have no need to attack again. The victory of the cross is complete, and there is no further need to attack. Here we see two attitudes: One is to sit, and the other is to stand. To sit is to rest in the Lord's victory, while to stand is to withstand Satan and to stop him from taking away our victory.

Christian warfare is a matter of warding off defeat; it is not a matter of fighting for victory. We have already overcome. We fight from the position of victory, and we fight to maintain our victory. We are not fighting to win a victory. We fight from victory; victory is something that is in our hands. The warfare spoken of in Ephesians is the warfare of the overcomers. We do not become overcomers through fighting. We need to distinguish between these two things.

How does Satan tempt us? He causes us to forget our own position and our victory. He blinds our eyes to our own victory. If we give in to his tactics, we will feel that victory is far away and beyond our reach. We must remember that the victory of the Lord is complete. It is so complete that our whole life is included in this victory! Once we believe, we overcome. Satan is defeated and we have overcome in Christ. Satan wants to steal away the victory which we have gained. His work is to taunt us to secretly find out if we still have the faith. If we do not know that victory is already ours, we will fail. But if we know our victory, his work will fail.

Therefore, we counter the work of Satan with the work of the Lord Jesus. We withstand Satan

through the Lord's manifestation, death, resurrection, and ascension. We are standing today upon the accomplished work of the Lord. We do not need to *try* to overcome in any way when Satan attacks us. Once we have the slightest thought of trying to overcome, we have failed, because our position is wrong. How great is the difference between a person who tries to overcome and one who withstands by knowing that he has already overcome. To withstand the devil means that we withstand him by the victory of Christ.

This matter indeed needs revelation. We need to see the manifestation of the Lord. We need to see His death, resurrection, and ascension. We need to know all these things.

As Christians we must learn to withstand the devil. We must say to Satan under all circumstances, "Get away from me!" May God be gracious to us so that we may all have such a faith. May we have faith toward the four things the Lord has accomplished for us, and may we exercise strong faith to withstand Satan and reject his work upon us. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 50, "Messages for Building Up New Believers (3)," pp. 733-742)

GOD'S ECONOMY IN FAITH

(Friday—Evening Session)

Message Three

Praying with God as Our Faith

Scripture Reading: Mark 11:20-24

I. In order to pray with God as our faith, we need to know the meaning of prayer—Matt. 6:9-10; 21:22; 1 John 5:14-15:

- A. Prayer is the flowing between man and God and the mutual contact between man and God.
- B. The real significance of prayer is to contact God in our spirit and to absorb God Himself—Eph. 6:18.
- C. A praying person will cooperate with God, work together with God, and allow God to express Himself and His desire from within him and through him.
- D. Real prayers cause our being to be wholly mingled with God and God to be mingled with us—1 Cor. 6:17.
- E. The more we pray, the more we will be filled with God and the more we will surrender to God and be gained by Him.
- F. To pray means to realize that we are nothing and that we can do nothing—Mark 9:28-29.
- G. The governing principle of our prayer should be that prayer brings us into God; the issue of proper prayer is that we find ourselves in God—Luke 11:1-13.
- H. Prayer is believers cooperating and co-working with God, allowing God to express Himself through them, and thus accomplish His purpose—Rom. 8:26-27; James 5:17.

II. In cursing the fig tree, a symbol of the nation of Israel (Jer. 24:2, 5, 8), so that it dried up, the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray by faith—Matt. 21:18-22; Mark 11:20-24:

- A. His teaching here was according to God's will, which is to be accomplished for the fulfillment of His economy—Rev. 4:11; Eph. 1:5, 9; 5:17:
 - 1. Not many see that the Lord's teaching on prayer is related to God's economy, which is to be accomplished by His faithful people doing His will.
 - 2. To pray such a prayer, we must be right persons doing God's will—His great will for the accomplishment of His economy—Rev. 4:11.
 - 3. We should be those who are carrying out God's will to accomplish His economy—to produce an organism for His good pleasure—Eph. 1:5, 9, 22-23.
- B. The Lord Jesus, who is right in the eyes of God, knows God's heart, so His cursing the fig tree was according to His knowledge of God's will in the fulfillment of God's economy to give up the rotten Israel—Matt. 21:19.
- C. Based upon this background, the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray for executing God's will according to His economy by faith—vv. 21-22.
- D. Our prayer should carry out God's will to have the Body of Christ, which will consummate the New Jerusalem—Eph. 1:9, 22-23; Rev. 21:2.

III. We need to pray with God as our faith—Mark 11:20-24:

- A. In Mark 11:20-24 the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray by faith for executing God's will.
- B. When the praying one is mingled with God and is one with God, God becomes his faith; this is what it means to have faith in God—v. 22.

- C. The praying one can have faith in God without doubting, but believing that he has received what he asked for, and he will receive it.
- D. In verse 24 the Lord Jesus said, “All things that you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and you will have them”:
 - 1. *Received* is the crucial word in Mark 11:24; faith is believing that we have received what we have asked for.
 - 2. The promise in this verse is comprehensive because it speaks of “all things.”
 - 3. Mark 11:24 speaks not only of the necessity of faith but also of the nature of faith; faith refers to the past, not to anything in the future.
 - 4. According to the Lord’s word, we should believe that we have received, not that we will receive—v. 24.
 - 5. To hope means to expect something in the future; to believe means to consider something as having been done.
 - 6. Faith is not only believing that God can or will do a certain thing but also believing that God has done that thing already.
- E. If we pray according to God’s will for the fulfillment of His economy, we are one with God and have the assurance that we have received what we have prayed for—Matt. 6:9-10:
 - 1. If we ask the Lord for things that satisfy our desire, we can never have the faith in God to believe that we have received what we asked for; this is because our prayer is not according to God’s will for the fulfillment of God’s economy.
 - 2. If we are absolutely one with God, we can have God as our faith and pray according to the knowledge of God’s will for the fulfillment of His economy, and we will believe that we have already received the things that we asked for and will receive them—Mark 11:24.

IV. The prayer in Mark 11:20-24 is a prayer with authority—v. 23:

- A. The most important prayer and the most spiritual prayer is the prayer of authority—Matt. 18:18; Mark 11:20-24.
- B. The prayer of authority is a command based on authority—Isa. 45:11; Mark 11:20-24:
 - 1. The prayer of authority is a commanding prayer—Isa. 45:11.
 - 2. If we wish to have weighty and valuable prayers before God, we need to be able to give out some authoritative commands before God—Mark 11:23.
- C. Praying with authority is praying the prayer of Mark 11:20-24:
 - 1. A prayer with authority does not ask God to do something; rather, it exercises God’s authority and applies this authority to deal with problems and things that ought to be removed—v. 23; Zech. 4:7; Matt. 21:21.
 - 2. A prayer with authority is not asking God directly; rather, it is dealing with problems by directly applying God’s authority—Exo. 14:15-27.
- D. Prayer with authority has much to do with the overcomers; every overcomer must learn to speak to “this mountain”—Mark 11:23:
 - 1. God has commissioned us to command what He has commanded and give orders to what He has given orders to—Matt. 17:20.
 - 2. This kind of prayer is directed not toward God but toward “this mountain.”
 - 3. The most important work of the overcomers is to bring the authority of the throne to earth; if we want to be an overcomer, we must learn to pray with authority and speak to the mountain—Rev. 11:15; 12:10.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE MEANING OF PRAYER

Now we may come to the first lesson of prayer—the meaning of prayer. May I ask you, brothers and sisters, what is prayer? What is prayer all about? What is the meaning of prayer? Many people, upon hearing the term *prayer*, immediately think that it means man coming before God to make supplication. Because man is in want and needs material supply, or is sick and needs healing, or has other problems and needs some solution, he goes before God, asking Him to supply his needs, heal his sickness, and solve his problems. Men consider these as prayers. Apparently, there are examples of such prayers in the Bible. For example, the widow in Luke 18 continually went to the judge, asking him to avenge her of her grievance. However, brothers and sisters, please remember that this is not the proper meaning of prayer as it is revealed in the Bible. We dare not say that such a definition is wrong, but it is too superficial and lacks both depth and accuracy. If we desire to know what real prayer is today, we must clearly realize that it is not man merely making supplications before God for his own needs.

We know that we should not judge any truth of the Bible merely on the basis of a single passage or aspect. In the same way, you cannot tell what a house looks like simply by one of its corners or rooms. You need to view it from various sides as a whole, and then you will be able to make an accurate judgment. In the same principle, if we collect all the Bible passages concerning prayer and view them as a whole, we will see that prayer is not just a matter of man making supplication to God because he has some needs. This may be partially the meaning of prayer but not entirely. If we have the time, we should gather all the specific examples of prayer in the Bible. For example, in the Old Testament there are the prayers of Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Nehemiah, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, and others, and in the New Testament there are the prayers of the Lord Jesus and of the disciples. If we study every one of these prayers and look at them as a composite, we will be able to see clearly what prayer is all about. It is not the intention of this writing to study them in such a detailed way; we will use only a simple word to speak concerning the meaning of prayer.

PRAYER BEING THE MUTUAL CONTACT BETWEEN MAN AND GOD

Prayer is not just man contacting God; it is the mutual contact between man and God. This matter of the contact between God and man is a very great subject in the Bible. We have often said that the purpose of man's living is to be God's vessel. In the universe God is man's content, and man is God's container. Without man, God has no place to put Himself—He becomes a homeless God. I do not understand why this is so, but I know that it is a fact. In the universe God's greatest need is man. God as an entity in Himself is complete, but as far as His operation in the universe is concerned, He still needs man to fulfill that operation.

By this you can understand the last sentence of Ephesians 1, which says that the church is the Body of Christ, the fullness of Christ. The term *fullness* is very hard to translate. It not only denotes the fullness of Christ but also implies the completeness of Christ. Hence, the church is, on the one hand, the fullness of Christ, and on the other hand, the completeness of Christ. In other words, without the church it seems that Christ is not at all complete.

We all must be very careful in understanding this word, for it can stir up vehement arguments in theology. I do not mean that God is incomplete and that He needs man to make Him complete. What I mean is that God in Himself is perfectly complete, but without man He is not complete in the universe according to His plan. O brothers and sisters, this matter is too glorious!

In His eternal plan God has ordained man to be His vessel, or in other words, to be His completion. Hence, Genesis 1 and 2 show that when God created man, He made two preparations concerning man. The first preparation was that He created man in His image and according to His likeness. As man was created according to God, he resembles God in many aspects. The various aspects of man's expression, such as his pleasure, anger, sorrow, joy, preference, choice, etc.—whether it be his emotion, will, or disposition—express God to a certain degree and are miniatures of all that is in God.

Another preparation was that God created for man a spirit in the depths of his being. Of the

countless varieties of living things in the universe, only man has a spirit. The angels are spirits, but that is a different matter. In the whole creation there is one kind of created being that is not spirit yet has a spirit, and that is man. Why did God create a spirit for man in the depths of his being? We all know that it was because God wants man to receive Him, who is Spirit. In the same way, He created a stomach for man because He wants man to take in food. Consider this: suppose God did not create a stomach for man—how could we take in food? Because we have a stomach, we can receive food into us, enjoy it, digest it, and assimilate it into our being, making it our constituent. In the same manner, since we have a spirit within us, we can receive God into us and assimilate Him, making Him our very constituent.

In the first two chapters of Genesis, when God created man to be His vessel, He made these two steps of preparation: one step was to create man to be like Him, and the other was to put a spirit within man so that man might receive Him. After He had made these two preparations, He placed Himself before man in the form of the tree of life in order that man might receive Him and obtain Him as life. Brothers and sisters, it is in man's spirit that the contact between God and man is made. Once there is such a contact between God and man, God enters into man to be his content, and man becomes God's vessel to express Him outwardly. Thus, God's eternal intention is fulfilled in man.

Please remember, real prayer is the mutual contact between God and man. Prayer is not just man contacting God but also God contacting man. If in prayer man does not touch or contact God, and God does not touch or contact man, that prayer is below the proper standard. Every prayer that is up to the standard is one which is a mutual flow and contact between God and man. God and man are just like electric currents flowing into one another. It is hard to say that prayer is solely God in man or solely man in God. According to the fact and experience, prayer is the flowing between God and man. Every prayer that is truly up to the standard surely will have a condition of mutual flowing between God and man so that man may actually touch God and God may actually touch man; thus, man is united with God, and God with man. Therefore, the highest and most accurate meaning of prayer is that it is the mutual contact between God and man.

PRAYER BEING MAN BREATHING GOD, OBTAINING GOD, AND BEING OBTAINED BY GOD

A real prayer is also man breathing in God just as he breathes in air. While you are thus breathing in God, spontaneously you are obtaining God, just as when you breathe in air, you receive air. Consequently, not only is God obtained by you to become your enjoyment, but also your whole being surrenders to God, turns unto God, and is wholly gained by God. The more you pray, the more you will be filled with God, and the more you will surrender yourself to God and be gained by Him. If you do not pray for a week or, even worse, a month, then you will be quite far from God. What does it mean to be quite far from God? It means that you cannot obtain God and be obtained by Him. The only remedy for this situation is to pray. And it is not enough to pray for only two or three minutes; you must pray again and again until you have actually breathed God and are actually obtained by God, and God by you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, real prayer is of great importance to a Christian's spiritual life.

Brothers and sisters, never think that prayer is merely asking God for something. For example, you need a house, and you ask God to prepare one for you. After praying, you receive a word from the Lord saying that what you have asked shall come to pass unto you. The next day a brother comes and says to you, "Do you need a house? My neighbor has two houses for rent; the location is convenient, and the rent is cheap." So you immediately thank and praise the Lord, saying, "Hallelujah, the Lord is really the true and living God; He has answered my prayer." I would not say that this is not prayer, but this is not adequate prayer. Brothers and sisters, if you have really learned the lesson of prayer, whether you can find a house is actually secondary; the primary thing you should be concerned about is whether you have obtained more of God and whether you have been gained more by God through such a prayer. If the result of a prayer is only the accomplishment of a particular matter, without obtaining God or being obtained by God, then such a prayer is a failure, a miscarriage. The ultimate result of a prayer

should be that the intercessor gains more of God and is gained more by God, although the thing which he has asked of God may also be fulfilled.

Please consider, are your experiences of prayer like this? Although many times we may not know such a meaning of prayer and may still pray to God concerning certain affairs, God still brings us into Himself through our prayers for those matters. For example, a sister who is a mother loves her child dearly but loves the Lord very little. Regardless how much you help her, she would not seek the Lord. However, one day her child becomes ill. After numerous visits to physicians, the child remains sick. She becomes helpless and has no alternative other than to put her trust in the Lord. When she comes to pray, she only asks the Lord to heal her child. She does not have the slightest intention of seeking the Lord Himself. Who would imagine that through such a prayer she would be able to actually meet Him, touch Him, and enjoy Him? Because of such a prayer, this one, who for many years refused to be gained by the Lord, has spontaneously entered into God and, at the same time, has been gained by God. But still she does not understand what has happened. After three days her child is actually healed, so she comes to the fellowship meeting and testifies how faithful God is, how He has answered her prayer, and how her child has been healed. Although she has obtained the reality in prayer, she still does not realize it. Many times we are just like that ourselves. When we see the desolation of the church and go to the Lord to pray, we feel that we are praying for the church's condition, but in God's view the purpose of our prayer is to cause us to touch Him, inhale Him, obtain Him, and allow Him to obtain us.

I believe that in the remaining years God will cause every one of His children to become more and more clear that real prayer is not to pray concerning affairs, ask for things, or intercede for people. Real prayer is to inhale God Himself, to obtain God, and to be obtained by God. All those prayers for people, affairs, and things that are outside God are not the essence of prayer but are merely the outer skin or accessories of prayer. A real prayer, a prayer of essence, is one in which you actually contact God, breathe Him, enjoy Him, obtain Him, are filled with Him, and allow Him to gain your being. If the children of God can see this point, they will have a better understanding of the real meaning of prayer.

**PRAYER BEING MAN COOPERATING AND CO-WORKING WITH GOD,
ALLOWING GOD TO EXPRESS HIMSELF AND HIS DESIRE THROUGH MAN,
AND THUS ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSE**

If a brother or sister has really learned the secret of prayer covered in the preceding two points, spontaneously there will be the following result: such a praying one will certainly cooperate with God, work together with God, and allow God to express Himself and His desire from within him and through him, ultimately accomplishing God's purpose. This is according to Romans 8:26 and 27, which tell us that we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Holy Spirit intercedes for us according to God's purpose. Actually, we do not know how to pray. We know what people ordinarily call supplication, but we know little about the prayer that is spoken of in the Scriptures. The first time I read these two verses in Romans 8, I questioned their meaning. When I was sick, I thought, did I not pray to God asking Him to heal me? When I was in want, did I not pray to God asking Him to send me provision? How could the Scriptures say that we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting? Gradually, the Lord showed me that we really do not know anything about the kind of prayer that God desires. We know those prayers that people generally consider to be prayers but that are below the standard. We do not know those prayers that touch God's desire and are up to the standard. This is our weakness. Thank God, in this matter of our weakness, the Spirit Himself joins in to help us and intercede for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Brothers, real prayers are the Holy Spirit within man expressing God's desire through man. In other words, real prayers are prayers involving two parties. They are not simply man alone praying to God, but they are the Spirit mingling with man, putting on man, and joining with man in prayer. Outwardly it is man praying, but inwardly it is the Spirit praying. This means that two parties express

the same prayer at the same time. Please remember that this alone is the prayer which is spoken of in the Scriptures.

We often speak of Elijah's prayer. James 5:17 says, "Elijah was a man of like feeling with us, and he earnestly prayed that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months." *Earnestly prayed* in Greek means "prayed with prayer," or "prayed in prayer." This is a very peculiar expression in the Bible. Please remember, this is what we mean by prayer of two parties. When Elijah was praying, he was praying with, or in, a prayer. In other words, he prayed with the prayer of the Spirit within him. Thus, we can say that Elijah's prayer was God praying to Himself in Elijah. Andrew Murray once said that a real prayer is the Christ who indwells us praying to the Christ who is sitting on the throne. That Christ would be praying to Christ Himself sounds strange, but in our experience this is really the case.

Let us look again at Romans 8:27: "The Spirit...intercedes...according to God." This means that the Holy Spirit prays in us according to God; that is, God prays in us through His Spirit. Thus, such a prayer certainly expresses God's intention as well as God Himself.

By these illustrations we can see that real prayers will certainly cause our being to be wholly mingled with God. We will become a person of two parties, i.e., God mingled with man. When you pray, it is He praying, and when He prays, it is also you praying. When He prays within you, you express the prayer outwardly. He and you are altogether one, inside and outside; He and you both pray at the same time. At that time you and God cannot be separated, being mingled as one. Consequently, you not only cooperate with God but also work together with God so that God Himself and His desire may be expressed through you, thus ultimately accomplishing God's purpose. This is the real prayer that is required of us in the Bible.

Hence, Jude 20 says, "Praying in the Holy Spirit." This means that you should not pray in yourself. In other words, it means that your prayer should be the expression of two parties, you and the Holy Spirit, praying as one. Ephesians 6:18 says, "By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit." It is hard to say that the spirit here refers solely to the Holy Spirit. All those who read the Bible from an orthodox viewpoint admit that the spirit here does not refer solely to the Holy Spirit; rather, it also includes our human spirit. When we pray, we must pray in such a mingled spirit.

From our fellowship in this chapter we can see that the Bible is God breathing out Himself, and prayer is our breathing in God. Bible reading and prayer are our breathing before God and thus our breathing in of God. Hence, we should not be those who only read the Bible and fail to pray. If we only read the Word, we do allow God to breathe out Himself, but we still do not breathe in God. Thus, we still need to pray. However, in our prayer our supplications for people, happenings, and things are but the outer skin, the framework. Real prayer always matches the Scriptures; it is an exhaling and inhaling before God, causing us and God, God and us, to contact one another and to obtain one another. Consequently, we wholly cooperate and work with God, and God expresses Himself and His desire through us, ultimately accomplishing His purpose. This is a fundamental meaning of prayer in the Bible. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1959, vol. 4, "Lessons on Prayer," pp. 17-24*)

THE FIRST GOD-MAN'S LIVING—A MAN OF PRAYER

In Cursing the Fig Tree, Teaching His Disciples How to Pray by Faith

In cursing the fig tree so that it instantly dried up, the first God-man taught His disciples how to pray by faith (Matt. 21:18-22; Mark 11:20-24).

His Teaching Being according to God's Will

The first God-man's teaching here was according to God's will for the accomplishment of His economy. Not many see that the Lord's teaching on prayer is related to God's economy, which is to be accomplished by His faithful people doing His will. The One who taught the disciples to pray by faith was the God-man, Christ. He is the only One who is absolutely right before God. To pray such a prayer

we must be right persons doing God's will. This is God's will not in small matters, such as where we should move, but His great will for the accomplishment of God's economy. Many Christians today use the term *the will of God* in a very shallow and light way. We should be those who are carrying out God's will to accomplish God's economy. God's economy is to produce an organism for His good pleasure. Israel disappointed God in this matter, so God came to the church, hoping that the church would be His organism. Eventually, the church, generally speaking, has also failed God. What is the real will of God that we have to carry out? It is to take care of the producing and building up of God's organism, which is the Body of Christ that will consummate the New Jerusalem.

*Cursing the Fig Tree So That It Dried Up,
according to God's Will in Fulfilling His Economy*

The Lord Jesus, who is right in the eyes of God, knows God's heart, so His cursing the fig tree was according to His knowledge of God's will in the fulfillment of God's economy to give up the rotten Israel (Matt. 21:19).

Teaching His Disciples to Pray

Based upon this background, the first God-man taught His disciples to pray for executing God's will according to His economy by faith (vv. 21-22).

Having Faith in God without Doubting

Thus, the praying one could have faith in God without doubting, but believing that he had received what he asked for, and he would have it (Mark 11:24). The praying one is now one with God, in union with God. He is mingled with God, so God becomes his faith. This is what it means to have faith in God, according to the Lord's word in Mark 11:22. The praying one is absolutely one with God, and God becomes his faith.

If we ask the Lord for things that satisfy our desire, we will not receive anything. This is because our prayer is not according to God's will for the fulfillment of God's economy, and we are not the right persons. First, we must be the right persons, absolutely one with God. One night, during my imprisonment by the Japanese for thirty days, I looked up and said, "Lord, You know why I am here." At the time it seemed as if the Lord Jesus was right before me. I had the full assurance to say to the Lord, "Lord, I am imprisoned for Your sake." We must first be the right persons before God, persons who are one with God. Then we can have God as our faith and pray according to our knowledge of God's will for the fulfillment of His economy. If we pray for something according to our desire, not according to God's will, to fulfill our purpose, not to fulfill God's economy, we can never have the faith in God to believe that we have received what we asked for. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1994-1997*, vol. 3, "The God-man Living," pp. 578-580, 582)

GOD'S ECONOMY IN FAITH

(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Four

Running the Christian Race So That We May Obtain the Prize by Looking Away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of Our Faith

Scripture Reading: Heb. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:13-14; 2 Tim. 4:7-8;
Rom. 12:3; S. S. 1:4; Jer. 31:3

I. “Therefore let us also, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, put away every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us and run with endurance the race which is set before us”—Heb. 12:1:

- A. The cloud is for leading people to follow the Lord (Num. 9:15-22), and the Lord is in the cloud to be with the people (Exo. 13:21-22); in Greek *witnesses* implies the sense of martyrs (Acts 1:8):
 - 1. With the people of faith, we can have the Lord's presence and His leading; all the people of faith, the church people, are the cloud; the best way to seek the Lord's presence is to come to the church.
 - 2. If anyone is seeking the Lord's leading, he must follow the cloud, the church; the Lord is in the cloud, meaning that He is with the people of faith.
 - 3. Since we are the people of faith, we are today's cloud, and people can follow the Lord by following us; those who seek Him can find His presence with us—cf. 1 Cor. 14:24-25; Psal. 36:8-9; 16:11.
- B. The Christian life is a race; every saved Christian must run the race to win the prize (1 Cor. 9:24); the prize is not salvation in the common sense (Eph. 2:8; 1 Cor. 3:15) but a reward in a special sense (Heb. 10:35; 1 Cor. 3:14); the apostle Paul ran the race and won the prize (9:26-27; Phil. 3:13-14; 2 Tim. 4:7-8):
 - 1. An encumbrance is a weight, burden, or impediment; the runners of the race strip off every unnecessary weight, every encumbering burden, that nothing may impede them from winning the race.
 - 2. The unique entangling sin in this context was the willful sin of forsaking the assembling together with the saints, of giving up the new covenant way in God's economy, and of going back to Judaism (Heb. 10:26); both the encumbering weight and the entangling sin would have frustrated the Hebrew believers and restrained them from running the heavenly race in the new covenant way of following Jesus.
- C. We need to run with endurance, asking the Lord to direct our hearts into the love of God and into the endurance of Christ—2 Thes. 3:5:
 - 1. This love is our love toward God, issuing from the love of God (1 John 4:19) that has been poured out in our hearts (Rom. 5:5).
 - 2. This endurance is to endure with the endurance of Christ that we have enjoyed and experienced—cf. Rev. 1:9.

II. “Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God”—Heb. 12:2:

- A. We can live the Christian life, run the Christian race, by looking away unto Jesus with undivided attention by turning away from every other object:
 1. The wonderful Jesus, who is enthroned in heaven and crowned with glory and honor (2:9), is the greatest attraction in the universe.
 2. He is like an immense magnet drawing all His seekers to Him—S. S. 1:4; Hosea 11:4; Jer. 31:3.
 3. It is by being attracted by His charming beauty (loveliness, pleasantness, delightfulness) that we look away from all things other than Him—Psa. 27:4.
 4. Without such a charming object, how could we look away from so many distracting things on earth?
- B. Jesus is the Author of faith, the Originator, the Inaugurator, the source, and the cause of faith; in our natural man we have no believing ability, but when we look away unto Jesus, He as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) transfuses us with Himself, with His believing element.
- C. Then, spontaneously, a kind of believing arises in our being, and we have the faith to believe in Him; this faith is not of ourselves but of Him who imparts Himself as the believing element into us that He may believe for us.
- D. Faith is Christ Himself believing for us in a very subjective way; He transfuses us with Himself, working Himself into us, until He, the very person, becomes the believing element in our being.
- E. Thus, it is not we who believe; it is He who believes within us; in this way He makes us a believing being (cf. Acts 6:5; 11:22-24a); apparently it is our believing, but actually it is His believing; this is genuine faith.
- F. Faith is a substantiating ability, a sixth sense, the sense by which we substantiate, give substance to, the things unseen or hoped for—Heb. 11:1:
 1. Substantiating is the ability that enables us to realize a substance.
 2. The function of our five senses is to substantiate the things of the outside world, transferring all the objective items into us to become our subjective experience.
 3. As the eye is to seeing, the ear to hearing, and the nose to smelling, so faith, our spirit of faith, is the organ whereby we substantiate everything in the unseen spiritual world into us—2 Cor. 4:13.
 4. In the divine and mystical realm of the consummated Spirit, we can exercise our spirit of faith with the spiritual senses of seeing the Lord (Eph. 1:18; Matt. 5:8; Job 42:5), hearing Him (Gal. 3:2; Rev. 2:7a), touching Him (Matt. 9:21; 14:36; John 4:24), tasting Him (Psa. 34:8; 1 Pet. 2:2-3), and smelling Him, being permeated with Him to such an extent that we become “a fragrance of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:15), with our Christian walk in love being a sweet-smelling savor to God (Eph. 5:2); furthermore, as His loving seekers, we eventually become mature in life to the extent that we have a spiritual intuition and olfactory sense of high and sharp discernment in order to discern the things that are of God and are not of God (S. S. 7:4b; Phil. 1:9).
- G. Faith, as the substantiation of things hoped for, assures and convinces us of things not seen; therefore, faith is the evidence, the proof, of things unseen—Heb. 11:1:
 1. “We were saved in hope. But a hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly await it through endurance”—Rom. 8:24-25.
 2. Our life should be a life of hope, which accompanies and abides with faith (1 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 13:13); we should be those who “walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham” (Rom. 4:12), who “beyond hope believed in hope” (v. 18).
 3. We need to exercise our spirit of faith in order to walk by faith and not by that which is

- seen (2 Cor. 4:13; 5:7); we do not regard, look at, “the things which are seen but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (4:18).
4. The Christian life is a life of things unseen; the degradation of the church is the degradation from unseen things to seen things—Heb. 11:27; 1 Pet. 1:8; Gal. 6:10.
 5. The Lord’s recovery is to recover His church from things seen to things unseen.
- H. Jesus is the Perfecter, the Finisher, the Completer, of our faith—Heb. 12:2a:
1. As we look away unto Him continually, He will finish and complete the faith that we need for the running of the heavenly race—v. 1.
 2. We all have the same faith in quality, but the quantity of faith we have depends upon how much we contact the living God so that we may have Him increased in us—Rom. 12:3:
 - a. Faith in the progressing stage comes through our contacting the Triune God, who is faith in us—1 Thes. 5:17.
 - b. The way to receive such a faith is to contact its source, the Lord, the processed and consummated God, by calling on Him, praying to Him, and pray-reading His word—Heb. 4:16; Rom. 10:12; 2 Tim. 2:22; Eph. 6:17-18; Heb. 4:2.
 - c. When we contact Him, He is overflowing within us, and there is a mutuality of faith among us; we are encouraged through the faith that is in one another—Rom. 1:12; Philem. 6.
 3. Our regenerated spirit, our spirit of faith, is the victory that overcomes the Satan-organized-and-usurped world—1 John 5:4; John 3:6; 2 Cor. 4:13; 1 John 5:18.
 4. The great irrepressible and unlimited power of faith motivates thousands to suffer for the Lord, risk their lives, and become overcoming sent ones and martyrs for the carrying out of God’s eternal economy, which is in faith—Luke 18:8; Phil. 2:30; Rom. 16:3-4; Acts 20:24; 1 Tim. 1:4; Heb. 12:3; cf. Judg. 8:4.
- I. According to Hebrews 12:2, for the joy set before Him, Jesus “endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God”:
1. The Lord Jesus knew that through His death He would be glorified in resurrection (Luke 24:25-26) and that His divine life would be released to produce many brothers for His expression (John 12:23-24; Rom. 8:29); for the joy set before Him (John 16:20-22), He despised the shame and volunteered to be delivered to the Satan-usurped leaders of the Jews and Gentiles and to be condemned by them to death.
 2. Therefore, God highly exalted Him to the heavens, seated Him at His right hand (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33-35), bestowed on Him the name which is above every name (Phil. 2:9-10), made Him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36), and crowned Him with glory and honor (Heb. 2:9).
 3. If we look away unto Him as such a wonderful and all-inclusive One, He will minister Himself as heaven, life, and strength into us, transfusing and infusing us with all that He is, so that we may be able to run the heavenly race and live the heavenly life on earth; in this way He will carry us through all the lifelong pathway of faith and lead and bring us into glory—2 Cor. 3:16, 18; 1 Pet. 5:4; 2 Tim. 4:8.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF FAITH THE SAINTS OF THE OLD COVENANT ONLY BEING WITNESSES OF FAITH

In this message we come to the Author and Perfecter of faith (Heb. 12:2). The saints of the old covenant were only witnesses of faith. None of them was the author, source, perfecter, or finisher of faith. In verse 1 of this chapter the witnesses of faith are considered as “a cloud of witnesses

surrounding us.” The Lord was in the cloud to be with His people (Exo. 13:21-22). The children of Israel followed the Lord according to the move of the cloud. Where the cloud was, there the Lord was also. Furthermore, the cloud is for leading people in following the Lord. If you have a heart to seek out the Lord and you read Hebrews 11, you may immediately have the sense that by the people of faith you can have the Lord’s presence and His leading. If you have the cloud, you will have the Lord. But if you miss the cloud, you will also miss the Lord. All the people of faith, the church people, are the cloud. The best way to seek the Lord’s presence is to come to the church. If anyone is seeking the Lord’s leading, he must follow the cloud, the church. The Lord is in the cloud, meaning that He is with the people of faith. Since we are the people of faith, we are today’s cloud, and people can follow the Lord by following us. Those who seek Him can find His presence with us. The Lord is where we are, and where we are is the direction in which the Lord is moving in these days.

ONLY JESUS BEING THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF FAITH

The Author of Faith

Only Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of faith. As we have seen, the saints of the old covenant were only the witnesses of faith, but Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of faith. The Greek word translated “Author” may also be rendered “Originator,” “Inaugurator,” “Leader,” “Pioneer,” “Forerunner.” It is the same word in Greek that is used for Captain in 2:10. Jesus is the Author of faith; He is the Originator, the Inaugurator, the source, and the cause of faith. The Author is the Originator and the Inaugurator; then He is the source and the cause. Since the Author is the Originator, He is also the Pioneer and Forerunner. Therefore, He is also the Leader and the Captain. If we put all these titles together, we have an adequate definition of Jesus as the Author of faith.

We need Jesus as the Author of faith because, according to our natural man, we do not have any believing ability. We do not have faith by ourselves. The faith we have through which we are saved is “not of ourselves; it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). We have “obtained” this “precious faith” by God’s gift (2 Pet. 1:1). When we look unto Jesus, He, as “the life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45 ASV), transfuses us with Himself, with His believing element. Then, spontaneously, the believing ability arises in our being, and we have the faith to believe in Him. It is not of ourselves, but of Him who imparts Himself into us as the believing element to believe for us. Hence, it is He Himself who is our faith. We live by Him as our faith, by His faith (Gal. 2:20), not by our own faith.

Jesus is the Author and the Originator of faith mainly in His life and in His path on earth. The Lord Jesus originated faith when He was here on earth. The life He lived was a life of faith, and the path He walked was a path of faith. In His life and path He originated faith. Hence, He is the Author of faith.

Jesus, being the Pioneer and the Forerunner, has cut the way of faith. If you read the four Gospels again, you will see that His life was a cutting life, a life that cut the way of faith. Wherever He went, it seems that there was a mountain or a river frustrating Him. But step after step, He cut the way of faith. If we have this view in reading the Gospels, we shall see that the very Jesus who is the Originator of faith was always cutting the way of faith, closing the gaps and removing the mountains like the builder of a highway. Since He has cut the way of faith, He is also the Pioneer and Forerunner on the pathway of faith.

As the Pioneer and the Forerunner of faith, Jesus is also the Leader and Captain of faith. He has cut the way of faith and, as the Forerunner, has taken the lead to pioneer it. Hence, He, as the Captain, can carry us through the pathway of faith in His footsteps. As we look unto Him as the Originator of faith in His life and in His path on earth, and as the Perfecter of faith in His glory and on His throne in heaven, He transfuses and even infuses us with the faith which He has originated and perfected.

The Perfecter of Faith

Jesus is also the Perfecter of faith. The Greek word translated “Perfecter” may also be rendered

“Finisher” or “Completer.” Jesus is also the Finisher, the Completer, of faith. By looking unto Him continually, we shall have Him finish and complete the faith which we need for running the heavenly race.

Jesus is the Perfecter of faith mainly in His glory and on His throne in heaven. He is sitting on the throne in glory to complete the faith which He originated while He was on earth. Being the Finisher and the Completer of faith, He will finish and complete what He has originated and inaugurated.

THE TRANSFUSION OF FAITH

We Having No Believing Ability Naturally

Now we come to the matter of the transfusion of faith. As we have seen, according to our natural man, we have no believing ability. The believing element is absent from our natural being. Naturally, we only have the unbelieving ability, the ability to disbelieve.

The Saving Faith Being Not of Ourselves

The saving faith is “not of ourselves; it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). Ephesians 2:8 tells us clearly that the faith through which we were saved is not of ourselves. We have received it as a gift from God. God is the source and giver of faith, and we are the recipients of this divine gift. God has put something into our being which becomes our faith. Second Peter 1:1 says that we “have obtained like precious faith.” Faith is precious because it has been given to us as a gift by God.

Having Christ as the Believing Element Transfused into Us

When we look unto Jesus, He transfuses us with Himself as the believing element and He becomes our faith. We have seen that faith, the substantiating ability, is like a sixth sense. We acquired this substantiating sense through the preaching of the gospel. Proper gospel preaching is not merely a matter of teaching; it must also be a matter of transfusion. Suppose I am preaching the gospel to some sinners. Before I can preach the gospel to them, I must first receive something of and from the Lord. Then, as I am preaching, what I have received of the Lord will enter, like electricity, into those who are listening. While I am speaking and the people are looking at and listening to me, something spontaneously and unconsciously is transfused into them. Although they may shake their heads, not consenting to my preaching, deep within they believe what I am saying. Although some may say to themselves that it is silly to believe, something within them continues to react and brings them to the point where they say, “Lord Jesus, thank You. You are so good. Lord, You are my Savior.” Because some element has been transfused into their being, they are able to believe in the Lord. I know of many stubborn ones who would not express in the meeting that they had come to believe in the Lord Jesus. They went home, but they had no peace, for something within stirred and troubled them. When it was time for the next gospel meeting, they said, “I would like to go there again.” This is the result of the transfusion of faith by God through a preacher.

Every gospel preacher must be a charming person. He must firstly be charmed himself and then he will be able to charm others. What he says may not seem logical, but, like a battery that is being charged, the hearers will be charmed. For this reason, the church must pray a great deal for the preaching of the gospel. The more we pray, the more charming the gospel meeting will be. The gospel preacher must pray until he has a heavenly charm and is fully charged with the divine element. If he is charged and charming, as he stands in front of the people, he will have the sense that something is being transfused into them. Some have even been afraid of such a preacher, saying, “Don’t look at him. If you do, you will be attracted by him because he is so charming.” This is the power of the gospel. Other speakers may be eloquent and well educated, but they are not charming. The gospel preacher may lack eloquence, but because he is so charming, others are charmed as they listen to him. Some element is infused into them through that charming preacher, and nothing can take it out of them. This infused element is faith.

This principle not only applies to the preaching of the gospel but to other forms of ministry as well. Ministry does not depend upon our eloquence but upon our utterance. Utterance is different from eloquence. Eloquence, like music, is something pleasant to the ear. Utterance, on the contrary, is the release of the divine element. If your ministry is correct, you will be charmed and charming whenever you come to minister. The proper ministry is altogether a matter of being fully transfused with God Himself. Firstly, we are charged with the divine element, and then, in the ministry, we radiate that divine element into others in a charming way. This is altogether a matter of God's grace.

As we have seen, God's grace is simply God Himself dispensed into us to meet our need. Sinners certainly need to have faith, but how can they have it? Naturally, we have no belief, only disbelief. But when the sinners come to the church and hear the proper preaching of the gospel, they are charged with God. The heavenly electricity, which is God Himself, is transmitted into them. Because God Himself is transfused into them in this way, they find that they have faith. This is the gift of faith, the nature and element of which is God Himself.

If we would have faith, we must look away unto Jesus, the source of faith. When we look away from all other things unto Him, He will radiate Himself into us, charging us with Himself. As a result, spontaneously we shall have faith. Faith does not originate with us; it originates with Him. Faith is Christ Himself believing for us in a very subjective way. He transfuses us with Himself, working Himself into us, until He, the very Person, becomes the believing element in our being. Thus, it is not we who believe; it is He who believes within us. In this way, He makes us a believing being. Apparently it is our believing; actually it is His believing. This is genuine faith.

Once Christ has originated this faith within us, He will never let it go. Rather, He will complete, finish, and perfect it. Do not think that you can be a giant of faith on your own. No, we do not have the slightest amount of faith. All the faith we have is just Christ Himself believing in us and for us. We live by His faith, by Him as our faith (Gal. 2:20).

Christ's believing element is charged into our being through the law of life. The more we allow the law of life to work in our being, the more we are able to believe. If we give the law of life the opportunity to work continuously in our mind, emotion, and will, its working will produce great faith in us. The book of Hebrews is focused on the law of life, and faith is the first-fruit of the working of the law of life in our being.

We have seen that the ultimate and consummate point of the arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle is the law of life typified by the tables of the testimony. The law is called the testimony because it is the expression and definition of what God is. Every law is the expression of the lawgiver. A good man makes good laws, and a bad man makes bad laws. The law one makes reflects what he is. Hence, the law of God is the reflection of God's being. Because God is a God of light and love and because He is righteous and holy, His law is also a law of light and love and is righteous and holy. The law, being the reflection of God, is the expression and testimony of God. It is also a shadow of the law of life. The law of life within us today is actually God's reflection and expression. The more the law of life works in our being, the more we bear God's image. In this way we become His expression and testimony.

The arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle ultimately leads to the law of life—the expression and testimony of God. In like manner, the experience of Christ which begins at the cross and consummates with the law of life issues in the testimony of God. Its goal is to have the expression of God. As the law of life works within us to bring about the expression and testimony of God, the first issue of its working is our believing. The most believing person is the one in whom the law of life has worked the most. Such a person will have the faith to believe God to the uttermost without any strain or strife. His believing is spontaneous because it comes from the working of the law of life within him.

The Bible is consistent. Although many different words, expressions, and terms are used, they all reflect one point. The law of life in Hebrews 8 issues in the believing ability, the faith, in Hebrews 11. Although we cannot understand this simply by reading the Bible, we can know it by our experience.

Firstly, we have the experience and then we have the confirmation from the revelation of the Bible. Apparently Hebrews 11 is unrelated to Hebrews 8. Nevertheless, according to life, Hebrews 11 is the issue of Hebrews 8, for the believing ability results from the working of the law of the divine life. When the law of life operates within us to make us the very reflection, expression, and testimony of God, we find it easy to believe. Our believing is spontaneous. In fact, we are unable to disbelieve, because the believing ability has been wrought into us. Now we can see why we must look away from all things unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith. When we look away unto Him, we give Him the opportunity and the freedom to work Himself into us. In this way the law of life can work in every inward part of our being until we are fully saturated with Him. The more we are saturated with Him, the easier it is to believe. This is the way to have faith. May we all experience faith in such a subjective way by looking away unto Jesus. (*Life-study of Hebrews*, pp. 551-558)

GOD'S ECONOMY IN FAITH

(Saturday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five

Speaking by the Spirit of Faith

Scripture Reading: Heb. 1:1-2a; Acts 1:8; 4:20, 29, 31; Rom. 10:14, 17;
1 Cor. 12:13; 14:26, 31; 2 Cor. 4:10-13; Eph. 5:18-19

I. Our God is a speaking God—Heb. 1:1-2a:

- A. The whole universe came into being by God's speaking—Rom. 4:17; Heb. 11:3; Ps. 33:9.
- B. The essence of the Epistle to the Hebrews is God's speaking in the Son—1:1-2a:
 - 1. God speaks in the Son, the Son speaks as the Spirit to the churches, and ultimately the Spirit speaks with the church—Rev. 2:7a; 22:17.
 - 2. It is altogether by this speaking story that God is brought into man and man is brought into God—John 1:14; 6:63.
 - 3. God's speaking to us proves that we are under His blessing—cf. 1 Sam. 3:1, 10, 21.
 - 4. The life of the believers hinges totally upon the Lord's speaking—Heb. 1:3; Matt. 17:5; Rev. 2:7a; S. S. 8:13; Heb. 5:13-14.
 - 5. The living God imparts and infuses Himself into us by speaking—2 Tim. 3:16-17; Ezek. 37:4-6:
 - a. When God speaks, the light shines, bringing us understanding, vision, knowledge, wisdom, and utterance—Psa. 119:105, 130.
 - b. When God speaks, life is imparted, and this life includes all the divine attributes and human virtues of Christ—John 6:63; 1:1, 4.
 - c. When God speaks, power is transmitted, and this is the growing and reproducing power of life—Mark 4:14, 26.
- C. Since God is a speaking God, when He created man in His image, He created man with the ability to speak just like Himself—Gen. 1:26-28:
 - 1. In God's creation of man, the most marvelous thing that He created was a spirit within man, and the second marvelous thing was that man was given the ability to speak—2:7, 19-20, 23.
 - 2. God shows us clearly in the Bible that His purpose in creating man was that man would speak for Him—John 12:50; 14:10; Acts 4:20, 31.
 - 3. God wants us to express Him and represent Him mainly by our speaking for Him—Gen. 1:26.
 - 4. As God's representatives, we must speak God's words—John 3:34; Acts 2:40; 5:20.

II. "Having the same spirit of faith according to that which is written, 'I believed, therefore I spoke,' we also believe, therefore we also speak"—2 Cor. 4:13:

- A. Speaking by the spirit of faith in our practical life is a great, crucial point.
- B. *Spirit of faith* is a very particular expression used only once in the Bible—v. 13.
- C. The spirit of faith is a mingling of the Holy Spirit with our regenerated human spirit—1 Cor. 6:17:
 - 1. The phrase *spirit of faith* places *spirit* in apposition to *faith*—2 Cor. 4:13.
 - 2. Faith is of the spirit; therefore, the spirit of faith is faith—v. 13.
 - 3. Our faith is the mingled spirit—1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Cor. 4:13.
- D. We must exercise such a spirit to believe and to speak, like the psalmist, the things we have experienced from the Lord, especially His death and resurrection—Psa. 22:1-22.

- E. Faith is in our spirit, which is mingled with the Holy Spirit, not in our mind; doubts are in our mind—1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:6; Eph. 4:23.
- F. Our believing faith becomes the speaking faith; when we turn to the spirit, we believe—2 Cor. 4:13b.
- G. Second Corinthians 4:10-13 indicates that it is by the mingled spirit that the apostles lived a crucified life in resurrection for the carrying out of their ministry:
 - 1. From the context of verse 13, we know that Paul was talking about his experience concerning the Lord's death and resurrection:
 - a. The apostle Paul testified concerning the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body—v. 10.
 - b. In verse 11 he went on to say that we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake so that the resurrection life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
 - c. Paul also said that death operated in us in order that His resurrection life may be dispensed into others—v. 12.
 - 2. Paul spoke all these things in the spirit of faith—v. 13.
- H. Faith comes from hearing, and hearing comes from the preaching of the word—Rom. 10:14:
 - 1. The source of faith is the word; this is why we must get into the Word—v. 17.
 - 2. The more we get into the Word, the more we will have faith, and this faith is the spirit—2 Cor. 4:13.
 - 3. By the spirit of faith we may speak the Word that is the source of our faith.
 - 4. Here is a cycle: the Word produces faith, faith is the spirit, and by this spirit we can speak the Word—Rom. 10:14, 17; 2 Cor. 4:13.

III. Christians are a speaking people; a genuine Christian is a speaking Christian—Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 12:3, 13; 14:19, 26; Eph. 5:18-19:

- A. The speaking God created the universe and continues to do all things through His speaking; therefore, everyone who has been saved, has been begotten of God, and has His life should learn to speak for Him and to speak His word—Acts 5:20; 2 Cor. 4:13.
- B. As Christians, we all are able to speak for the Lord—Acts 4:20, 29, 31.
- C. We need to realize that as believers we have been made witnesses of the living Christ; witnesses are speakers—1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32:
 - 1. A witness is a speaking one, one who only speaks things concerning the one he is testifying—1:8.
 - 2. We should speak God's word in season and out of season for the carrying out of God's eternal economy—2 Tim. 4:2.
 - 3. We are His witnesses, and we have to speak Him, speak for Him, and speak forth Him on every occasion.
- D. In the church meetings, all the saints should be speakers—1 Cor. 14:19, 26, 31:
 - 1. As speaking people, we should not be dumb or silent, for the God whom we worship is the speaking God—v. 26.
 - 2. Christian meetings should be full of mutuality in speaking—Eph. 5:19.
- E. As members of the Body of Christ, we need to be filled in spirit—v. 18:
 - 1. That with which we are filled will overflow from within us; this overflow is "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord"—v. 19.
 - 2. If we are filled in spirit unto all the fullness of God, we will spontaneously speak to one another concerning Christ; therefore, speaking is the way to overflow.
- F. First Corinthians 12:13 reveals that Christ has baptized us in the Spirit into the Body, and

now we all are drinking of the Spirit:

1. We are in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in us—Rom. 8:4, 6, 10-11, 14, 16.
2. This makes us fully qualified and able to function in the meetings by speaking for the Lord and even by speaking Him forth—1 Cor. 12:13; 14:26, 31.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

SPEAKING BY THE SPIRIT OF FAITH

In 2 Corinthians 4:13 Paul says, “Having the same spirit of faith according to that which is written, ‘I believed, therefore I spoke,’ we also believe, therefore we also speak.” In the first book to the Corinthians Paul tells them to speak in the Holy Spirit. Now in the second book he says that he spoke by the spirit of faith. Christians today have paid much attention to the speaking in the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians. But to my knowledge, no one has ever paid much attention to the speaking by the spirit of faith.

In verse 7 Paul speaks of the treasure in earthen vessels, the very Christ as the radiance of God who was radiated into his being. Following this, he says that the putting to death of Jesus was working on the apostles and that the life of Christ was manifested in them (vv. 10-11). At this point he mentions the same spirit of faith. In the ancient time the psalmist had the spirit of faith (Psa. 116:10). Now the apostles also had the spirit of faith. They believed, therefore they also spoke. What did they speak? They spoke their experience. It was not just a certain doctrine, a certain point concerning the Triune God, but the experience of the death, life, and resurrection of Christ.

Even though Paul was not speaking with his tongue, he was speaking by his pen. When he was writing, he had the spirit of faith. He wrote with boldness, with the spirit of faith. Without the spirit of faith, I may speak to you about my experience of the Lord’s death, life, and resurrection in this way: “Dear saints, thank the Lord, I am really not worthy, but His mercy has put me here. You know I am so weak. I want to tell you that I have been put to death quite often; I am so shameful. A number of times I was really dead. But through much suffering and much prayer, yesterday I was resurrected. Still, this morning I am so weak; probably you can realize I am even sleepy.” What kind of speaking is this? In this speaking there is no spirit, no faith. If Paul were here, he would say, “Dear saints, let me tell you, the putting to death of Jesus has been upon me all the day. Praise Him, His life is also manifested upon me. I say this by the spirit of faith!” This makes quite a difference. Regrettably, in many of the meetings the dear ones who share speak in the former, poor way. When they speak, there is no spirit. When they speak, there is no faith.

About one hundred years ago Henry Alford wrote concerning the spirit of faith: “Not distinctly the Holy Spirit,—but still not merely a human disposition: the indwelling Holy Spirit penetrates and characterizes the whole renewed man.” What is referred to here as the human disposition is actually the human spirit. Even by that time the saints did not know much about the human spirit. No writers ever spoke much about the human spirit until the beginning of the twentieth century. Mrs. Penn-Lewis in one book spoke strongly concerning the difference between the human spirit and the soul, and we received much help from her. We have continued to study this and have developed it to the uttermost. Now among us even the little ones know that the Holy Spirit mingles Himself with our human spirit. The spirit here is not only the Holy Spirit but the Holy Spirit with our human spirit (Rom. 8:16).

Marvin Vincent in his word study of the New Testament follows Henry Alford, saying the same thing: “Spirit of faith: not distinctly the Holy Spirit, nor, on the other hand, a human faculty or disposition, but blending both.” He uses the word *blending*. There is a blending between the Holy Spirit and our human spirit. This is what we call the mingled spirit. We have the mingled spirit of faith.

Faith is a wonder, a miracle, within us. Every genuine Christian has such a wonder, a miracle, within him. No one can describe or explain it, but we do have such a thing. We have illustrated this by the action of a camera. The camera has a lens outside and film within. Opposite the camera there is

scenery. Also, light is needed. When you click the shutter, the light shines onto the film. There is an exposure, and a picture is produced. This exposure describes the operation of faith. We are just like a camera. The gospel described in the New Testament is the scenery, the Holy Spirit is the heavenly light, and our spirit is the film. When you hear the speaking of the gospel once, twice, even four or five times, there is a click within you. Whatever is described in the speaking would then be in your spirit. No one could ever remove it from you. That is faith.

Now by this faith you could go everywhere to tell people that Jesus is the Savior. One may ask, “How do you know?” You just know. They do not believe it, but you believe. There is no way to drop what we have received in this way. Once this click occurs in you, it remains forever. Now wherever we go, we would tell people that Jesus is the Savior: “He is living, and He lives in me!” In this way you speak by the spirit of faith. In my speaking you could realize that I am so strong and very bold. Why am I so bold? I have the spirit of faith. I speak, not by my mind but by the spirit of faith.

Faith is in our spirit, which is mingled with the Holy Spirit, not in our mind. Doubts are in our mind. This can be illustrated by the situation with an angry person. When one is angry at someone, his anger is not in his mind. The anger is in his spirit. Every angry person does not exercise his mind. If he would get into his mind and consider a little, he would not be mad. This is why when you preach the gospel, you should not stir up the person’s mind. If you stir up his mind, he would not believe. You should rather induce him to get into the spirit. Then you can complete the transaction. When we get into our mind, faith, like anger, will be gone. In such a state I may testify, “Well, I just came here yesterday to visit the church, but a brother told me this morning that you are going to have a meeting, and he asked me to give a testimony. I don’t know what to say. I even don’t know whether what I am going to tell you is really of the spirit or from my mind. I just don’t know.” This kind of testimony will kill the entire meeting. No doubt I would be speaking from my thoughtful mind. I must rather give a living testimony, testifying boldly, “Saints, Hallelujah! Oh, the Lord Jesus is living! I want to tell you that He is living. He lives in me. And He was so living yesterday.” Then I would continue to tell you much more by the spirit of faith.

This is what the church needs for edification, for the building up. Speaking in tongues, even the genuine tongues, does not build the church (1 Cor. 14:4). What builds the church? Prophesying, that is, speaking Jesus, speaking Christ, builds up the church. So Paul says, “I would rather speak five words with my mind...than ten thousand words in a tongue” (v. 19). Ten thousand words in a tongue mean nothing in the church meetings, but the plain words spoken by anyone by the spirit of faith and in the Holy Spirit build the church. Therefore, we all have to practice everywhere to speak. We speak on the street; we speak in the classroom; we speak in the office; we speak at home; we speak to everybody, to all kinds of persons; and, we especially speak in the meetings, even the more in the home meetings. Learn to speak this way. This kind of speaking enlivens, this kind of speaking refreshes, this kind of speaking makes people new, this kind of speaking makes people strong and happy, and this kind of speaking imparts life to others and dispenses the Triune God into the listeners. This kind of speaking will overcome any kind of opposing environment. We must speak—speak in the Holy Spirit and speak by the spirit of faith. If everyone would become a speaker, a speaking witness, the situation would be overturned. This kind of speaking is a strong testimony of the Lord’s recovery. We must not simply have a congregation with a speaker, hymns, a prayer, a speech, and so forth; we must be different. We must be revolutionized to have new meetings with everyone speaking. There should be no chairman, no one presiding. Everyone speaks everywhere, anytime, to anyone. We speak in the Holy Spirit and by the spirit of faith. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1985, vol. 3, “The Divine Speaking,” pp. 300-304*)

SPEAKING CHRIST TO OTHERS IN A LIVING WAY

Acts 8:1 tells us that all the thousands of new believers were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria as a result of a great persecution. Only the apostles remained in Jerusalem. Those who were

scattered preached the good news of the word wherever they went. These believers had been saved only a short time, but when they were scattered, they spoke Jesus. Had they learned as much as we have? Many of us have been in the trainings for years. We have heard a lot. In the past eleven and a half years I have put out over twelve hundred Life- study messages on the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. These printed messages comprise over twelve thousand pages. Most of us have a set of the printed Life-studies on our shelves. We have a lot. Those scattered ones in Acts 8, however, had heard very little about Christ, yet they went out to speak Him. Prior to being scattered they had heard only Peter's messages in Acts 2 through 5. In all of Peter's messages he did not speak anything about being saved from hell and going to heaven. What Peter spoke was altogether the resurrected Christ: "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified" (Acts 2:36). This was Peter's speaking, and surely those scattered ones had learned just to speak the same thing. Wherever they went, they spoke Christ.

Dear saints, now we are in the Lord's recovery, and I do believe that now is the time for the Lord to carry out His up-to-date move. All of us in the Lord's recovery have to speak Christ in our daily life to our parents, our children, our cousins, and our in-laws. We all owe so much to our relatives. Try to write a list of all the names of your relatives. Among these names maybe twenty percent are saved, and the rest are remaining in unbelief. They need your speaking. All your relatives need the real help rendered by your speaking of Christ. Do not preach in a religious way, but speak Christ to your relatives in a living way. Speak to your father. Speak to your mother. Speak to your aunt. Speak to your uncle. Speak to your brother. Even if both you and your brother are Christians, you still need to speak one to another. Let your parents hear your speaking. Do not talk about computers, physics, or mathematics but only Christ. He is the unique treasure. Speak about Jesus, Christ, the life-giving Spirit, the all-inclusive, processed Triune God. Your parents would marvel at such a speaking.

Continue to speak Christ every day. All human beings today need Christ, yet we need to speak to them. Speak in a living way, in a practical way, according to your experience of Him. Speak in your office, at the coffee break, at your lunch break, at least five minutes every day, five days a week, four weeks a month. At least twenty times monthly you could speak Christ to them.

In the past few years many of us felt that we could not speak to others due to the defamation of the opposers. We should not take this excuse any longer. Forget about all the defamations. We just need to speak Christ to others. Nothing is so sweet, so fresh, so fragrant as Jesus. We have to speak Him.

PROCLAIMING THE WORD IN SEASON AND OUT OF SEASON

In 2 Timothy 4:2 Paul charges Timothy to "proclaim the word; be ready in season and out of season." When I was studying this verse, I checked with myself as to what word Paul charged Timothy to proclaim. That helped me to go back to the preceding chapter. Second Timothy 4:1 is surely a continuation of Paul's thought at the end of chapter 3. In the last three verses of chapter 3 Paul says, "From a babe you have known the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work" (vv. 15-17). From these verses we can realize that the word Paul charged Timothy to proclaim was the word in the sacred writings of the Scriptures that Timothy had known from a babe. We all have to get into the Word, into the Scriptures. The charge of the apostle Paul to Timothy was based upon Timothy's knowledge of the Bible. If he had not known the Bible, what kind of word could he have proclaimed? We must proclaim the word that we have learned from the Word of God. This is what the early believers did in Acts 5:42 when they met from house to house "teaching and announcing the gospel of Jesus as the Christ." In the home meetings they taught and announced what they had learned concerning Christ.

Paul charged Timothy to be ready "in season and out of season" to proclaim the word. Many times we say that now is not the time to speak, that it is out of season. That is the right time for us to

speaking. We all must speak out of season. I surely treasure all the young saints and desire to rescue them from the pastoral system. The young ones who are still in school have the most people around them. Every school is a big fishing pond full of fish. This is an environment arranged by God for speaking to others. Students always enjoy listening to their classmates much more than to their teachers or parents. We have to learn to catch these fish by speaking Christ to them. We have to be made the fishers of men, bringing people to Christ and to the home meetings. For this, I do not trust in any human arrangement but in the young saints' acting, behaving, working, endeavoring, and struggling to contact their fellow students. If we would do this, within a short time many would be baptized and added to the churches.

SPEAKING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul refers to the matter of speaking in the meetings. In verse 2 he reminds the Corinthians, "You know that when you were Gentiles, you were always being led away to dumb idols, whenever and however you were led." The worship of dumb idols had made them a dumb people. Because the object of their worship was a dumb idol, their worshipping made them a dumb people. But now the Corinthian believers were different. They were not worshipping the dumb idols anymore. They were worshipping the living God, who is the speaking God. This speaking God was just the speaking Spirit, who is the Spirit of God, who is also the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in verse 3 Paul says, "No one speaking in the Spirit of God says, Jesus is accursed; no one can say, Jesus is Lord! except in the Holy Spirit." I like these two phrases *in the Spirit of God* and *in the Holy Spirit*. *In* means that we all have been put into this Spirit. If you are not in Him, if you are not in the Holy Spirit, how could you speak something in the Holy Spirit? Can we all say that we are in the Holy Spirit? Be careful about my question. I do not ask, "Is the Holy Spirit within us?" We all have the assurance to say that the Holy Spirit is in us, but are we in the Holy Spirit? Doctrinally we may say yes. We have to know that the Spirit being in us is the essential aspect of the Spirit and that our being in the Spirit is economical. I believe that many of us already know that the Spirit, on the one hand, is a drink to us and, on the other hand, is clothing to us. Drinking is something within; clothing is something upon us. The drinking water is in us, and we are in the clothing. If the Holy Spirit is in us, then are we in the Spirit? Some Pentecostal people may say, "No! You are not in the Spirit yet. You need a baptism with the Holy Ghost. You need to get into the Spirit. You need to pray and fast and learn how to turn your jaw to speak in tongues. Then you will have the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and you will be in the Spirit." In verse 3 Paul does not say that no one can speak in tongues except in the Holy Spirit. I cannot find such a word in the Bible. Paul says that no one can say, "Jesus is Lord" and not be in the Holy Spirit. Can you say, "Jesus is Lord"? If so, you are in the Holy Spirit. Go and tell this to your relatives, friends, and colleagues. We do have 1 Corinthians 12:3 as a solid ground to say, and to say with assurance, that we are in the Holy Spirit. We do not need to speak in a strange tongue but rather just say, "O Lord Jesus," and we are in the Spirit.

When we come to the meetings, we need to practice speaking this way in the Holy Spirit. Do not stand up in the meeting and say, "Brothers and sisters, I have been very weak in these last two weeks. I'm still weak. You can see how weak I am." This is terrible. When you stand up in the meeting to speak, stand up in this way: "Brothers and sisters, let me tell you, I am no longer weak! I am empowered in the One who empowers me, so I can do everything. Formerly, I could not submit myself to my husband. Now it's easy for me to do it. I am the top wife. Hallelujah, brothers." This is the best speaking. In every locality some saints have learned to be "professional" priests praying whenever the church comes together for the prayer meeting. These dear ones are the "professionals" to pray in the meetings. In the same way, some saints have become "professional" at giving a testimony at the end of the message meetings. I use the word *professional* in a positive sense. That is, we all have to learn to be the "professional" speakers speaking in the Holy Spirit.

It is no wonder that Paul stresses this matter of speaking so much. In 1 Corinthians 12:7 Paul says

that the manifestation of the Spirit is given, not primarily as miraculous things but as a word of wisdom and a word of knowledge. The word of wisdom is the word concerning Christ as the deeper things of God predestined by God for our portion. This refers to Christ in a deeper experience as revealed in 1 Corinthians 2:6-10. The word of knowledge is the word that imparts the definition, description, and understanding of Christ as God's everything. But we need to know this. We need the word of knowledge concerning Christ's riches, such as His being our righteousness, our wisdom, our power, our justification, our sanctification, and our redemption, and we need the word of wisdom concerning the depths of Christ. We need to speak these things. We need the word of wisdom to speak the depths of Christ, and we need the word of knowledge to describe all the rich aspects of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 14:1 Paul says, "Desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy," that you may speak for God. In verse 4 Paul says, "He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but he who prophesies builds up the church." To build up others and to build up the church, we need to prophesy, to speak forth Christ. Then in verse 26 Paul says, "Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm." This corresponds with Ephesians 5:18-19: "Be filled in spirit, speaking to one another in psalms." When we come together, we should have a psalm for speaking Christ, or a teaching telling people the things concerning Christ, or a revelation, the word of wisdom, to unveil the depths of Christ. We have to do all for the building up of others and of the church.

All these verses show us that the way to meet, especially in the small home meetings, is to speak Christ. Learn to speak Christ. To practice this present move of the Lord needs a lot of learning. I do not expect that we could get this done successfully in a short time. I rather would expect initially to have a failure. To be successful in anything, there first must be some failures. If within the coming three years we could have the home meetings fully built up, this might be the greatest mercy and grace that the Lord would give us. Pray for this. I just present this to you and to your discernment. I hope that you all could have the best discerning ability in your spirit that you would say, "Praise the Lord, this is no doubt the Lord's up-to-date move to accomplish, to carry out, His recovery for the fulfilling of His eternal purpose in building up the church." (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1985, vol. 3, "The Divine Speaking," pp. 287-291, 293-294*)

GOD'S ECONOMY IN FAITH

(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Six

The Linking Faith—the Faith of the Overcomers

Scripture Reading: Heb. 13:7; Rom. 1:17; 4:17; 10:17;
Gal. 5:6; 6:10; Rom. 12:3; *Hymns*, #535

- I. In order to be men full of faith (Heb. 13:7; Acts 6:5), we need to see that “faith comes out of hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17):**
- A. The source of faith is the word, but we have to realize the crystallization of this point; there are three aspects of the word:
 - 1. First, there is the written word of God—the Bible—John 10:35.
 - 2. Then there is the living word of God—Christ—1:1.
 - 3. Finally, there is the applied word of God—the Spirit—Eph. 6:17; John 6:63.
 - B. The written word, the living word, and the applied word refer to God Himself; God's written word in the Bible becomes Christ as the living word, who is applied to us as the Spirit, the word of the Spirit; the more that God is gained by us in this way, the more He becomes our faith.
 - C. The crystallization of the source of faith is God in His written word contacted as the living word and applied as the word of the Spirit so that we can gain the Triune God, who is able to call the things not being as being and give life to the dead—Rom. 4:17.
- II. We need to see the effect of faith—nothing is impossible to faith:**
- A. “If you have faith like a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Move from here to there, and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you”—Matt. 17:20b.
 - B. *Hymns*, #535, written by Charles Wesley, expresses the effect of faith; stanza 5 says, “Let me no longer live, but Thee,” indicating that faith always annuls us and reveals Christ to us.
 - C. Only God is all able, omnipotent; nothing is impossible to Him (19:26); but the Lord also said that nothing is impossible to faith, indicating that God and faith are one; faith is the subjective God applied to our being; thus, just as nothing is impossible to God, nothing is impossible to faith.
- III. The believers, the believing ones in Christ, are the household of faith—Gal. 6:10:**
- A. This household is a big family, and the family name is “faith”; this is the home of faith; we may say that a certain home is the Smith home or the Lee home, but now we are all members of the “faith home.”
 - B. We are members of the great family, the household, of faith; this faith house is a house that believes in God through His word—Heb. 1:2; Matt. 17:5.
- IV. The believers' faith in Christ brings them into the life union with Christ (John 3:15, 36); the word of God is embodied in Christ and realized in the Spirit to be our faith; the believers live Christ and walk by this faith:**
- A. To believe into Christ is to receive Him and be united with Him as one—1:12-13; 3:16.
 - B. This faith brings us into the life union with Christ, who is the embodiment of God realized as the all-inclusive Spirit to be our faith; faith links us with the Triune God.
 - C. As the organism of the Triune God, Christ is the true vine, and we are His branches who have been organically united with Him by believing into Him; we need to remain in this

organic union by abiding in Him—15:1, 5.

- D. Faith is the linking of our salvation; it links God with us and links us to God; this linking makes us God-men.
- E. We live Christ by a linking organ, and this linking organ is faith; thus, Paul says in Galatians 2:20 that the life that he lived, he lived by faith, the faith of Jesus the Son of God, “who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”
- F. When we call upon the Lord by saying, “O Lord Jesus, I love You,” He becomes the faith imparted into us so that we spontaneously live Him by this faith; living faith operates through our love for the Lord (5:6); He Himself as the faith becomes our faith, and this is the linking organ to link us to the unlimited, infinite Christ.
- G. By just speaking a simple word to the Lord in conversation with Him out of our love for Him and by a little calling on the Lord, we are infused with Him; the infusing of Christ into us causes us to have Him as our faith, which is the linking organ that links us with Him; this is the way to live Christ—Phil. 4:6, 12.
- H. We believers walk by faith, by our unseen God, not by sight; this faith links us all the time to our wonderful God—2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:27; 1 Pet. 1:8.
- I. To walk by faith means that our walking is linked with God; in Luke 18 the Lord indicated that we also suffer persecution by faith; in Luke 18:8 the Lord said, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”—this means we have to suffer all the persecutions by faith.

V. The way to receive such a linking faith is to contact its source, the processed and consummated God, by calling on Him, praying to Him, pray-reading His word, and musing on His word; this faith links us with God and imparts, transfuses, God into us; then we will become men of faith—Heb. 4:16; Rom. 10:12-13; 2 Tim. 2:22; Eph. 6:17-18; Psalms 119:15 and footnote 1:

- A. This faith links us with God and imparts, transfuses, God into us to become our living faith; this is the faith of the believers in its progressing stage.
- B. The initial stage of faith is the faith that comes from the hearing of the word; the Spirit was installed into us through the hearing of the word; now this Spirit, or this faith, which has been installed into us, stays within us and grows—Rom. 10:17; 12:3.
- C. Romans 1:17 says that “the **righteous** shall have **life** and live by **faith**”—this verse reveals that the structure of the gospel of God is the righteousness of God, the life of Christ, and the faith of the believers; this verse can also be considered as the banner of God’s eternal economy.
- D. To have life by faith is the initiation; to live by faith is the going on, the progressing stage of faith; faith in the second stage, the progressing stage, is the linking faith that comes to us through our contacting the Triune God.
- E. If you contact God, faith grows in you, which means that God increases in you; we all have the same faith in quality, but the quantity of faith we have depends upon how much we contact the living God so that we may have Him increased in us; when God increases in us, the linking faith in the second stage grows in us—cf. Col. 2:19.

VI. Romans 12:3 says, “Not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith”:

- A. To think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think without a sober mind annuls the proper order of the Body life; God gave us the same faith in quality but not in quantity; the matter of quantity depends upon how we grow; if we grow today as the apostle Paul grew,

the portion of faith we receive will be greatly enlarged.

- B. God first allotted faith to us in quality, and then He apportioned it in quantity; what kind of faith we have depends upon God's allotment; how much faith we have depends upon God's apportioning.
- C. God's apportioning depends upon our attitude; if we are not sober-minded, God would not increase His apportioning of faith to us, and He probably would even decrease it—cf. Luke 1:53; Matt. 5:3.

VII. Faith is the indicator of the believers' life in the enjoyment of the Divine Trinity—1 Thes. 1:3, 5, 7-8; Rom. 1:8:

- A. Paul remembered the Thessalonians' "work of faith"; their faith became such an indicator of their life in the enjoyment of Christ that they became a pattern to all the believing ones—1 Thes. 1:3, 7-8.
- B. Faith is not for us to accomplish great things; faith is for us to live God, to express God, and to minister God to people; faith is not for us to perform something great; faith is to live God and annul ourselves—1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5.
- C. In all that we are and do, people must see that we are enjoyers of God; we should always bear an indication that we are nothing, but God in Christ is everything to us; we need to be those who, like Watchman Nee, pay more attention to life than work (see *Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*, ch. 11).

VIII. The linking faith is the divine requirement for the overcomers to meet Christ in His triumphant return—this is based on Luke 18:8, where the Lord said, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?":

- A. May the Lord be merciful to us that when He comes back, He can find us as the believing ones, who always trust in Him, not in ourselves, and who always have no assurance in ourselves—2 Cor. 1:8-9; John 15:5; Phil. 3:3; cf. S. S. 8:5.
- B. J. N. Darby once said, "O the joy of having nothing and being nothing, seeing nothing but a living Christ in glory, and being careful for nothing but His interests down here"—this is faith.
- C. We are not for big miracles, big works, or big careers; the Lord is expecting to find, at His coming back, the ones who live by the linking faith; Christ expects to find us as His hidden overcomers—Rom. 11:3-4; Psalms 83:3b.
- D. The believers who live an overcoming and exulting life by the linking faith will be found by Christ at His return as the treasures ready to receive the salvation of their souls as the end (result) of their faith—1 Pet. 1:8-9.
- E. Today we are making ourselves ready to be His bride (Matt. 25:10; Rev. 19:7-9); to make ourselves ready is to become an overcomer, who is always linked by the living faith with the Triune God.

IX. The overcomers who live by faith will be rewarded by Christ with the co-kingship and the top enjoyment of the divine life with Him in the millennium (20:4, 6); the Lord will then say to His overcomers, "Well done, good and faithful slave...Enter into the joy of your master" (Matt. 25:21, 23).

X. By this linking faith we are linked to God in Christ to participate in all that the all-inclusive Christ is, has, and has attained to, for the producing of the organic members of Christ to constitute and build up His organic Body, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the enlargement and expression of the

eternal Triune God in His unlimited glory in the mysterious mingling of divinity with humanity for eternity (Rev. 21:2—22:5); this is the eternal fulfillment of Romans 1:17—“the righteous shall have life and live by faith”!

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE ESSENCE OF THE BELIEVERS' FAITH

The Effect of Faith—Nothing Being Impossible to Faith

In Matthew 17:20b the Lord spoke concerning the effect of faith: “If you have faith like a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Move from here to there, and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.” Nothing is impossible to faith. *Hymns*, #535, written by Charles Wesley, expresses this effect of faith:

All things are possible to him
That can in Jesus' name believe;
Lord, I no more Thy name blaspheme,
Thy truth I lovingly receive.
I can, I do believe in Thee;
All things are possible to me.

'Twas most impossible of all
That here sin's reign in me should cease;
Yet shall it be, I know it shall;
Jesus, I trust Thy faithfulness.
If nothing is too hard for Thee,
All things are possible to me.

Though earth and hell the Word gainsay,
The Word of God shall never fail;
The Lord can break sin's iron sway;
'Tis certain, though impossible.
The thing impossible shall be,
All things are possible to me.

All things are possible to God;
To Christ, the power of God in man;
To me when I am all renewed,
In Christ am fully formed again,
And from the reign of sin set free,
All things are possible to me.

All things are possible to God;
To Christ, the power of God in me;
Now shed Thy mighty Self abroad,
Let me no longer live, but Thee;
Give me this hour in Thee to prove
The sweet omnipotence of love.

Only God is all able, omnipotent; nothing is impossible to Him (19:26). But the Lord also indicated that nothing is impossible to faith. So this indicates that faith and God, God and faith, are one. If you do not have God, God remains apart from you. If you have God in you, this God becomes faith. Faith is the subjective God applied to your being. Thus, just as nothing is impossible to God, nothing is

impossible to faith.

The Household of the Faith

The believers are the believing ones in Christ, who are the household of the faith (Gal. 6:10). In the universe there are many houses with many households. But there is one particular house with millions of members. That is the house of faith. We belong to this house. This is a big family, and the family name is *faith*. This is the home of faith. We may say that a certain home is the Smith home or the Lee home. Now we are all members of the “faith home.”

We are believers, who do not believe nonsensical things. We believe in the word, and the word has three stages: the written word, the living word, and the applied word. Over two thousand years ago, there was only the written word, not the living word, because Christ was not here yet. Today we have the living word. Without Christ as the living word, it was very hard for God’s word to become the applied word as the Spirit. This is because before Christ came, the Spirit was mostly objective; He was not yet within God’s people. Before Christ, the Spirit of God was upon God’s people. But today we have the Triune God embodied in Christ and realized as the all-inclusive, compound, life-giving Spirit indwelling us all the time. Thus, when we touch the Bible, right away the Bible can become living and applied.

We are the members of the family, the household, of the faith. This faith house is a house that believes in God through His word. Hebrews 1 says that God has spoken (vv. 1-2). This word becomes the living word, Christ, and this living word is applied by the Spirit. Then we have the Triune God as the word in us. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1994–1997*, vol. 1, “Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans,” pp. 289-291)

Faith Being the Indicator of the Believers’ Life in the Enjoyment of the Divine Trinity

We may say that we enjoy Christ and enjoy the Divine Trinity, but what kind of indication can people see in us of this enjoyment? Faith is the indicator of the believers’ life in the enjoyment of the Divine Trinity (1 Thes. 1:3, 5, 7-8; Rom. 1:8). Paul wrote a letter to the saints in Thessalonica, and he said that he remembered their work of faith. Their work of faith became such a strong factor in their lives that people everywhere were talking about their faith. This means that faith became a strong indicator of the Thessalonians’ enjoyment of the Divine Trinity. Paul said that they became a pattern to all the ones who believe in Christ. Their faith became such an indicator of their life in the enjoyment of Christ that they became a pattern to all the believing ones.

“Those who believe” are the believing ones. We should try our best not to use the nickname *Christian* (see 1 Pet. 4:16, footnote 1, Recovery Version). Instead, we should use the name *believer*. I am a believer. There is a big difference between being a believer and being a mere Christian. There are millions of Christians today, but how many of these are believing ones? Quite often we may ask someone, “Are you a Christian?” The person may say that he is a Christian from a Christian family but that he is not like a Christian because he does not have faith. In his daily life he is everything and he does everything. This is not faith. Faith is to believe that God is and I am not.

If you came to me to ask me if I am a Christian, I would say instead that I am a believer in Christ. There is a big difference between saying that you are a Christian and saying that you are a believer. There are many Christians who do not believe. But by God’s mercy today, I believe. When we believe, this means we believe that God is everything and we are nothing. Today God does everything. I am doing nothing. Today my God, my Christ, is everything to me, and I become nothing. I work, but it is not I but Christ who works in me. Faith is the indicator of the believing ones who have God in Christ and nothing else.

In Christianity faith is for performing big careers. This is not only absolutely wrong but also absolutely devilish. Faith is not for performing any career. Faith is to live God and to annul yourself.

You have to be annulled. How could you carry out some career for yourself? Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 says, “If I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing” (v. 2). Strictly speaking, with us, the believing ones, faith is not for us to accomplish careers, to accomplish a big work.

In the early days of my ministry, I heard quite often, “You have so many people, but you don’t do anything. You don’t have a school, a hospital, or a university. What are you doing here?” Actually, in a sense, we are doing nothing. Recently, someone asked me, “Do you have some kind of plan?” I said, “Brother, we never have any plan.” Dear saints, especially the young ones, do not think that faith is for us to accomplish big things. Faith is for us to live God, to express God, and to minister God to people.

Many of the missions and denominations that came to China set up universities and hospitals. They did many works, but not many ministered Christ to others. Those in the Pentecostal movement say that if you have the faith, you can do great works. The Pentecostal movement began from the middle of the last century. But you cannot find a group of Pentecostal people who minister Christ as life to people. They promote the performance of miracles, but the apostle Paul did not do this. Paul says that he was sent to minister Christ in His unsearchable riches to people.

Right after I was saved, I was seeking to know the Bible. I met a Brethren group who knew the Bible, and I heard many of their teachings. Later, I met Brother Watchman Nee. I realized that Brother Nee’s teaching was to minister Christ as life. He was not like the Brethren who ministered teachings, types, and prophecies. I learned a lot from them because they were good Bible teachers. But I never heard them give one message on Christ as life. Then when I met Brother Nee, I found out the difference. I am sharing this to impress us that faith is not for us to perform something. That is wrong.

After we moved to Anaheim, we began to be opposed, and I met with one of the leading opposers. He asked me how many people we had among us with doctor’s degrees. I told him that we did not have many. He said that he had one hundred people with doctor’s degrees working with him. His boast meant nothing. If it took a doctor’s degree to serve the Lord in His ministry of life, then Peter, Paul, and even Jesus Himself would have been disqualified. None of them had any formal degree. Watchman Nee and I finished only the second year of a university. He studied at a school established by the British, and I studied at a school established by the American Presbyterians from Southern California. Neither of us had a degree.

Faith is not for us to perform something. Of course, in the Lord’s ministry, there is an amount of work. But we should not pay more attention to the work and less attention to life. If we do this, we are through. At Stanford all the professors have a doctor’s degree, but that is not the church. The church is composed of groups of “fishermen.” In 1 Corinthians 1:26-28 Paul says that in the church at Corinth there were “not many wise according to flesh, not many powerful, not many wellborn. But God has chosen the foolish things [men—the same in the following] of the world that He might shame those who are wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world that He might shame the things that are strong, and the lowborn things of the world and the despised things God has chosen, things which are not, that He might bring to nought the things which are.” In 1943 we had a migration of seventy saints with their families from Chefoo to Inner Mongolia. Not one had even finished high school. Some of them were shoemakers. Eventually, within one winter, they turned more than forty Swedish China Inland Mission churches to the recovery. This is the operation of life.

Do not think that you can do something, so you are somebody. You should say, “Lord, I don’t want to be anybody, to be anything; You be my everything. You are, but I am not.” This is faith. Within you there must be the indicator of this linking faith. When people contact you, they should see that there is a strong factor indicating that you are linked with God. Your faith must be an indicator to make you a pattern. Do not learn from anyone how to do things. That means nothing. But you have to learn from someone how to live God, how to live Christ, how to magnify Christ, and how to minister Christ to others. Dear saints, this is what we should have. Wherever we go and wherever we are, we should bear an indication that we are nothing, but God in Christ is everything to us. We should live such a life.

Faith is the indicator of the believers' life in the enjoyment of the Divine Trinity. The faith of the Thessalonians was highly appraised by the apostle (1 Thes. 1:3). Their faith in its much assurance became an indicator of their abundant enjoyment of life in Christ (v. 5). You may perform big miracles, yet people cannot see in you any indication that you are an enjoyer of God. Both the Thessalonians' and the Romans' faith made them a pattern to the believing ones in Christ and became a part of the preaching of the believing ones in Christ (vv. 7-8; Rom. 1:8). In ancient times they not only preached Christ but also preached the faith of the believing ones.

The Linking Faith Being the Divine Requirement for the Overcomers to Meet Christ in His Triumphant Return

The linking faith is the divine requirement for the overcomers to meet Christ in His triumphant return. This is based upon Luke 18:8, where the Lord said, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" Today the entire world is unbelieving. Where is faith today among not only the Gentiles, the pagans, but also among the Jews, the Catholics, the Protestants, and the Pentecostal people? If the Lord came today, where could He find faith? Nearly no one on this earth is believing. But by His mercy, in the past years, through Brother Nee's leadership, we have been brought into a situation of learning not to trust in ourselves for anything, but to believe that our God is everything.

I hope that when the Lord comes back, He can find you and me as the believing ones, who always trust in Him, not in ourselves, and who always have no assurance in ourselves. Our full assurance is in Him. This is the linking faith. This faith qualifies the overcomers. It is the divine requirement for you and me as the overcomers to meet Christ in His triumphant return.

Eventually, the Lord will find some, a small number of overcomers, who are living by the linking faith when He returns. In the ancient times Elijah pleaded with God against Israel by saying, "Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars; and I am left alone, and they are seeking my life" (Rom. 11:3). Then the Lord told Elijah, "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal" (v. 4). Look at today's world. It is hard to see any believing ones. But here and there some believing ones are hidden.

I believe that in comparison, there are more believing ones hidden in the recovery than in other places. People may say concerning us, "They can do nothing. They only say, 'O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah.' When they come together they say, 'Lord Jesus, I love You. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Amen.' This is all that they can do." This is because we are only for Christ Himself. We are not for big miracles, big works, or big careers. When the Lord comes back, He is expecting to find such people. Christ expects to find, at His coming back, the ones who live by the linking faith. Christ expects to find us as His hidden overcomers.

The believers who live an overcoming and exulting life by the linking faith will be found by Christ at His return as the treasures ready to receive the salvation of their souls as the end (result) of their faith (1 Pet. 1:8-9). In a sense, we do not know anything or do anything. We only know how to overcome and how to exult by the linking faith. Those who live by faith today will eventually receive the end of their faith, that is, the salvation of their souls. We have received a salvation, but this is just the initial salvation. The progressing stage of salvation is the stage of transformation. The completing stage of salvation is the stage of glorification. If we live by the linking faith in the progressing stage to be transformed, we will be kings with Christ in the millennial kingdom.

We are now making ourselves ready for that day. To make ourselves ready is to become an overcomer, who is always linked by the living faith with the Triune God. Every day, morning and evening, you have to say, "Lord, I praise You that from morning to evening, I am linked to You. There is a living faith that links me with You so that I live You, walk with You, and live with You. I am one with You, just as You are one with me." This is the qualification for you to be an overcomer, to meet Christ at His coming back.

The overcomers will be rewarded by Christ with the co-kingship and the top enjoyment of the

divine life with Him in the millennium (Rev. 20:4, 6). The Lord will then say to His overcomers, “Well done, good and faithful slave...Enter into the joy of your master” (Matt. 25:21, 23). This is just like what J. N. Darby once said: “O the joy of having nothing and being nothing, seeing nothing but a living Christ in glory, and being careful for nothing but His interests down here.”

A CONCLUDING WORD

The three points covered in this chapter are essentially crucial to a believer who lives the life of a Christ-pursuing God-man that he may be one of the overcomers whom the Lord desires to have for the accomplishment of God’s eternal economy in the last days as the consummation of this age. Right after we have received Christ into us as our Savior and life by being attracted by Him, the divine grace, which is the consummated Triune God, begins to abound in us. The first issue of the abounding of the divine grace is the linking faith, which is the living God moving in us to link us to all His unsearchable riches. This linking faith is the measure according to which God dispenses into us His super-abounding grace to meet our need (Rom. 12:3). Such a faith is the indicator of the living of the Christ-pursuing God-man, which is the real expression of the consummated God in Christ as His embodiment for the building up of the organic Body of Christ to be the organism of the consummated Triune God. So, such a faith constitutes the overcomers for the satisfaction of Christ’s desire. Thus, this overcoming faith qualifies the Lord’s overcomers, who are waiting for and eagerly expecting the coming back of the Lord, who will find them at His coming as men of His linking faith (Luke 18:8), as treasures for His kingdom in the thousand years of His reign.

This is the ultimate fulfillment of Romans 1:17, that “the **righteous** shall have **life** and live by **faith**.” The **righteous** shall have **life** and live by **faith**! This word should be the banner of God’s eternal economy, which is altogether a matter in faith (1 Tim. 1:4).

The righteous, those who are absolutely right before God and before man, shall have life, the divine life. Then, how can we, the vile sinners, have the divine life of the righteous God according to His righteousness? By faith! It is by faith, which is the moving and working God in Christ who puts us into Christ as our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30), that we, the sinners, have the divine life according to God’s righteousness judicially. By this linking faith we are linked to God in Christ to participate in all that the all-inclusive Christ is, has, and has attained to, for the producing of the organic members of Christ to constitute and build up His organic Body, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the enlargement and expression of the eternal Triune God in His unlimited glory in the mysterious mingling of divinity with humanity for eternity (Rev. 21:2—22:5). This is the eternal fulfillment of the gospel in Romans 1:17, that “the righteous shall have life and live by faith.” (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1994–1997*, vol. 1, “Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans,” pp. 319-325)

GOD'S ECONOMY IN FAITH

(Lord's Day—First Morning Session)

Message Seven

Taking Up the Shield of Faith, Experiencing the Proving of Our Faith, and Receiving the End of Our Faith— the Salvation of Our Souls

Scripture Reading: Eph. 6:12, 14-16; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5;
1 Pet. 1:7, 9; 4:12, 16; Heb. 10:35, 37, 39

I. As members of the Body of Christ engaged in warfare “against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies,” we need to take up the shield of faith, with which we “will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one”—Eph. 6:12, 16:

- A. The shield of faith is not something that we put on but something that we take up in order to protect ourselves against the attacks of the enemy and to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one—v. 16.
- B. We need to realize that faith is a shield placed between us and Satan:
 - 1. Faith is a safeguard against the flaming darts of the enemy—accusations, temptations, proposals, doubts, questionings, lies, snares, and attacks—2 Cor. 2:11.
 - 2. Satan's flaming darts come as thoughts injected into our mind; these thoughts may seem to be our own thoughts, but they are thoughts coming from Satan.
 - 3. When the darts come, they hit the shield, and we are able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one—Eph. 6:16.
- C. Faith comes after truth, righteousness, and peace—vv. 14-15:
 - 1. We need the truth to gird our loins, righteousness to cover our conscience, peace as the standing for our feet, and faith to shield our entire being.
 - 2. If we have truth in our living, righteousness as our covering, and peace as our standing, we will spontaneously have faith—vv. 14-16.
- D. The shield of faith has several aspects: faith in God (Mark 11:22), faith in God's heart (Rom. 8:31-39), faith in God's faithfulness (1 Cor. 1:9; 1 John 1:9), faith in God's ability (Eph. 3:20), faith in God's word (John 6:63, 68; Acts 20:32), faith in God's will (Eph. 1:9, 11), and faith in God's sovereignty (Rom. 9:19-29).

II. First Peter 1:7 speaks of the proving of our faith:

- A. The proving of faith is the testing for approval; the Greek word rendered “proving” means “testing for approval.”
- B. We are put into trials because our faith needs to be tested, approved—4:12.
- C. No one who has believed in the Lord and has received grace can avoid the testing of faith—John 3:15, 36; 1:16.
- D. The Bible shows that there is no faith without testing; all faith must be tested—1 Pet. 1:7; 4:12:
 - 1. God tests our faith in order that we may grow in faith and in life—Eph. 4:15:
 - a. No Christian can grow without first having his faith tested.
 - b. When our faith is tested, we spontaneously grow—1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18; 1 Cor. 3:6-7.

2. God tests our faith to satisfy Himself—proving that we have genuine faith—1 Pet. 1:7:
 - a. It is genuine faith that satisfies God—1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5.
 - b. A faith that is approved is a glory to God’s name—1 Pet. 4:11; John 12:28:
 - (1) God’s name is glorified in this world through an approved faith—1 Pet. 1:7.
 - (2) When we pass through tribulations, persecutions, obstacles, and darkness, and we still believe after these tests and still stand fast after these trials, this faith will glorify God’s name—2:12; 4:12, 16.
- E. The approval of faith comes out of the proper faith; the stress here is not on faith but on the proving of faith by trials that come through sufferings—1:7.
- F. In verse 7 Peter says that the proving of our faith is “much more precious than of gold which perishes though it is proved by fire”:
 1. The words *much more precious than of gold...by fire* do not modify *faith*; they modify *proving*.
 2. This means that the proving of our faith is much more precious than the proving of gold:
 - a. The comparison here is that between the proving of our faith and the proving of gold.
 - b. Gold is proved by the purifying fire; in like manner, our faith is proved by trial.
- G. It is the trying, the proving, of faith, not the faith itself, that may be found unto praise—vv. 7-8:
 1. This is like the school’s examination of the student’s studying: what is found to be approved is the examination, not the student’s studying itself.
 2. If the proving of our faith is positive, the proving will result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ—vv. 7-8:
 - a. The Lord is with us today (Matt. 28:20) but in a hidden, veiled way.
 - b. His coming back will be His revelation, when He will be seen openly by all—Rev. 1:7.
 - c. At that time not only He but also the proving of our faith will be revealed.

III. The proving of our faith being found unto praise, glory, and honor results in receiving the end of our faith—the salvation of our souls—1 Pet. 1:9:

- A. The salvation in verse 5 is full salvation, ultimate salvation, the salvation of the Triune God; it refers specifically to the salvation of our souls from the dispensational punishment of the Lord’s governmental dealing at His coming back.
- B. This is the salvation—the salvation of our souls—which is ready to be revealed to us at the last time, the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ in glory; the salvation of our souls is the end of our faith—vv. 9, 13; Matt. 16:27.
- C. Our soul will be saved from sufferings into the full enjoyment of the Lord at His revelation, His coming back—25:31:
 1. pleasures in this age so that we may gain it in the enjoyment of the Lord in the coming age—10:37-39; 16:24-27; Luke 17:30-33; John 12:25:
 - a. To lose the soul-life means to lose the enjoyment of the soul, and to save the soul-life means to preserve the soul in its enjoyment—Matt. 16:25.
 - b. We will either lose our soul-life today and gain it in the coming age, or save our soul-life today and lose it in the coming age.
 - c. If we would enter into the Lord’s joy in the coming age, we need to pay the price in this age by losing our soul-life—25:21, 23.
 2. At the Lord’s revelation, through His judgment seat, some believers will enter into the joy of the Lord, and some will suffer in weeping and gnashing of teeth—vv. 21, 23;

24:45-46; 25:30; 24:51.

3. To enter into the Lord's joy is the salvation of our souls—Heb. 10:39:
 - a. The saving, or gaining, of our soul depends on how we deal with our soul in following the Lord after we are saved and regenerated.
 - b. If we lose our soul now for the Lord's sake, we will save it, and it will be saved, or gained, at the Lord's coming back—Luke 9:24; 1 Pet. 1:9.
 - c. The gaining of the soul will be the reward of the kingdom to the overcoming followers of the Lord—Heb. 10:35; Matt. 16:22-28.
- D. The power of God is able to guard us unto this salvation so that we may obtain it; the power of God is the cause of our being guarded, and faith is the means through which the power of God becomes effective in guarding us—1 Pet. 1:5.
- E. We should eagerly expect this marvelous, full, and ultimate salvation and prepare ourselves for its splendid revelation—Rom. 8:19, 23.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

EXPERIENCING AND ENJOYING CHRIST AS THE CONSTITUENTS OF GOD'S ARMOR

Faith as the Shield

Ephesians 6:16 says, "Besides all these, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one." We need truth to gird our loins, righteousness to cover our conscience, peace as the standing for our feet, and faith to shield our entire being. If we live by God as truth, we have righteousness (4:24), and righteousness issues in peace (Heb. 12:11; Isa. 32:17). Having all these, we can easily have faith as a shield against the flaming darts of the evil one. Christ is the Author and Perfecter of such faith (Heb. 12:2). For us to stand firmly in the battle, we need to be equipped with all these four items of God's armor.

The shield of faith is not something that we put on, but something that we take up in order to protect ourselves against the attacks of the enemy. Faith comes after truth, righteousness, and peace. If we have truth in our living, righteousness as our covering, and peace as our standing, we will spontaneously have faith. This faith is a safeguard against the flaming darts, the attacks, of the enemy.

We certainly are not to have faith in our own ability, strength, merit, or virtue. Our faith must be in God (Mark 11:22). God is real, living, present, and available. We need to have faith in Him.

We also should have faith in God's heart. Every Christian needs to know and trust both God and the heart of God. God's heart toward us is always good. No matter what may happen to us or what kind of sufferings we may experience, we should always believe in the goodness of God's heart (Rom. 8:31-39). God has no intention to punish us, to injure us, or to cause us to suffer loss.

Along with faith in God's heart, we should have faith in God's faithfulness (1 Cor. 1:9; 1 John 1:9). We may change, but God does not change. As James 1:17 says, with God there is no variation or shadow cast by turning. Furthermore, God cannot lie (Titus 1:2) but is always faithful to His word.

God is not only faithful but also able. Therefore, we need to have faith in God's ability. In Ephesians 3:20 Paul declares that God "is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think."

Still another aspect of our faith is faith in God's word. God is bound to fulfill all that He has spoken. The more He speaks, the more responsible He becomes to fulfill His own word. We can tell Him, "God, You have spoken, and Your written Word is in our hand. Lord, You are bound to fulfill Your word." We should praise God for His faithful word.

We also need to have faith in God's will. Because God is a God of purpose, He has a will (1:9, 11). His will with respect to us is always positive. Hence, no matter what befalls us, we should not doubt God's will, and we should not care for our happiness or our environment. Rather, we should have faith in and care for God's will. Our environment may change, but God's will never changes.

Furthermore, we must have faith in God's sovereignty (Rom. 9:19-29). Because God is sovereign, He can never make a mistake. Under His sovereignty, even our mistakes work for good. If God did not sovereignly allow us to make mistakes, we could not possibly make them. When we are wrong, we need to repent. Yet there is no need for us to regret, for that means we lack faith that God is sovereign over our mistakes. After we repent for a mistake or shortcoming, we should exercise faith in God's sovereignty. We could not have made that mistake if He had not sovereignly allowed us to do so. Hence, there is no need for regret.

We all need to have full faith in God, in God's heart, in God's faithfulness, in God's ability, in God's word, in God's will, and in God's sovereignty. If we have such faith, Satan's flaming darts will not be able to damage us.

The flaming darts are Satan's temptations, proposals, doubts, questions, lies, and attacks. Every temptation is a deceit, a false promise. Satan often makes proposals to us. For this reason, we need to get into the Word. If we are not in the Word, we will have no covering against the devil's proposals. Doubts and questions are also the flaming darts of Satan. Note that a question mark looks very much like a serpent. It was Satan who asked Eve, "Did God really say?" (Gen. 3:1). When the devil questions us in this way, our response should be to flee, without even talking to him. Many times Satan attacks us with lies, but the shield of faith guards us against these flaming darts.

The devil's flaming darts come as thoughts injected into our mind. These thoughts may seem to be our own thoughts, but they are actually Satan's. We should never confess to the Lord all these thoughts injected into us by Satan in his subtlety. Instead, we should say, "Lord, I am fallen, but I am under Your cleansing. Satan, this thought is yours, and you must bear the responsibility for it. I will not share this responsibility."

If we would have the faith to be defended against Satan's flaming darts, we need a proper spirit with a conscience void of offense. However, faith is not mainly in our spirit nor in our conscience but in our will, the strongest part of our heart. Romans 10:10 says that we believe with our heart. According to our experience, this faith in our heart is related mainly to the exercise of our will. No one with a weak will can have strong faith. In James 1:6 we are told that he who doubts is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind. Such a person has a vacillating will. Hence, if we would have faith, we need to exercise our will. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 3463-3466)

THE PROVING OF OUR FAITH

In 1 Peter 1:7 Peter continues, "That the proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold which perishes and is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the unveiling of Jesus Christ." In this verse Peter gives the reason we are put into trials. We are put into trials because our faith needs to be tested, proved.

The Greek word rendered "proving" means testing for approval. It is the proving, the testing, of our faith, not our faith itself, that may be found unto praise. This may be compared to an examination in school related to a student's study. It is not the student's study itself that is found approved; rather, it is the examination that is found to be approved. Of course, the approval of our faith comes out of the proper faith. The emphasis here is not on our faith; the emphasis is on the proving of our faith by the trials through sufferings.

A good student will actually welcome the opportunity to be examined. An examination will prove how thoroughly he has studied and how much he knows concerning the material on which he is being tested. Without examinations, a superior student would never be proved to be outstanding. A student who studies diligently may look forward to an examination because it will prove, both to the student himself and to others, that he is an excellent student. This is an illustration of what Peter means by the proving of our faith.

In verse 7 Peter says that the proving of our faith is "much more precious than of gold which perishes and is proved by fire." The words "much more precious than of gold...by fire" do not modify

faith; they modify the proving. This means that the proving of our faith is much more precious than the proving of gold. The comparison here is not that between faith and gold. Many Christians understand verse 7 in this way; however, this understanding is wrong. The comparison here is that between the proving of our faith and the proving of gold. Gold is proved by the purifying fire. In like manner, our faith is proved by trial. This proving is certainly more precious than the proving of gold. (*Life-study of 1 Peter*, pp. 45-46)

GOD'S ECONOMY IN FAITH

(Lord's Day—Second Morning Session)

Message Eight

Walking in the Steps of That Faith of Our Father Abraham

Scripture Reading: Acts 7:2; Heb. 11:8-10;
Gen. 12:1-3, 7-8; 13:3-4, 18; 14:1-24; Gal. 3:6-7, 14, 16, 29

- I. Christ as the Triune God-man (Col. 2:9) is the seed (descendant, or son) of Abraham (Gen. 12:7; Matt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16); because the believers are in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) and Christ is in them (Col. 1:27), they are one with Christ and are of Christ as a part of Christ (Eph. 5:30); thus, we who have believed into Christ are also Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:7, 29):**
- A. In resurrection Christ, as the last Adam in the flesh, became (was transfigured—pneumatized—into) the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit of life, to dispense Himself into us (1 Cor. 15:45b; Rom. 8:2) for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ.
 - B. The resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit is the transfigured seed (descendant, or son) of Abraham dispensed into us to make us the sons of Abraham, the corporate seed of Abraham, those who can receive and inherit the consummated Spirit as the blessing of Abraham—Gal. 3:6-7, 14, 16, 29:
 - 1. The physical aspect of the blessing that God promised to Abraham was the good land (Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 17:8), which is a type of the all-inclusive Christ as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17).
 - 2. Christ as the life-giving Spirit is the blessing of Abraham (Gal. 3:14), the reality of both the seed of Abraham and the good land promised to Abraham; our blessing today is God Himself, who is embodied in Christ and realized as the Spirit to be dispensed into us for our enjoyment.
 - 3. In the gospel we have received the greatest blessing, which is the Triune God—the Father, Son, and Spirit—as the processed, all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit dwelling in us in a most subjective way for our enjoyment; oh, what a blessing that we can enjoy such an all-inclusive One as our daily portion!
 - C. As believers in Christ, we are the corporate seed of Abraham, repeating the history of Abraham; as the sons of Abraham, the corporate seed of Abraham, we must “walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham”—Rom. 4:12:
 - 1. Abraham became the father of faith (v. 16; Gal. 3:7-9, 29); he also is “the father of us all” (Rom. 4:16):
 - a. Genesis tells us that Abraham had two kinds of descendants, who are likened to the dust of the earth (13:16) and the stars of the heavens (15:5); his earthly, physical descendants are as the dust of the earth, and we, the New Testament believers in Christ as his heavenly, spiritual descendants, are as the stars of the heavens (22:17-18).
 - b. As the father of all those called by God, Abraham was the first of a new race chosen by God; we were born into the fallen Adamic race, but we have been reborn into the called-out Abrahamic race; whoever is of faith, as Abraham was, is a member of this new race and a son of Abraham—Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:7.
 - 2. Abraham's living by faith is presently being repeated among us; the Christian life and the church life today are the harvest of the life and history of Abraham—Heb. 11:8-19.

II. Abraham's faith did not originate with himself; rather, his believing in God was a reaction to the God of glory appearing to him and to the transfusing and infusing of God's element into his being—Acts 7:2; cf. John 14:21; Mark 11:22:

- A. Faith is our reaction to God, produced by His transfusion, infusion, and saturation—Rev. 5:6; 2 Cor. 2:10; Heb. 12:2; Gal. 2:20; cf. Mark 11:22.
- B. We may have the concept that Abraham was a giant in faith, but if we consider Abraham's history, we will realize that the only giant of faith is God Himself; Abraham's faith did not come from his natural ability; by God's appearing to Abraham, he was transfused with God as his believing element to be his faith, which was his appreciation of God as a reaction to God's attraction.
- C. Through His repeated appearances to Abraham, God transfused Himself into him, causing him to experience a spiritual infusion with a spiritual infiltration of God's essence into his being—Gen. 12:1-3, 7-8; 13:14-17; 15:1-7; Rom. 4:3; Gen. 18:17-19; cf. Acts 26:16; 22:14-15.
- D. The Lord Jesus appeared to Abraham as the great I Am, the God of glory, to transfuse Himself into Abraham—John 8:56-58; Exo. 3:14-15; Acts 7:2.
- E. We need to come again and again to the Lord and beseech Him: "Appear to me again and again, and speak to me again and again"; we need to have a continuous seeing, an eternal seeing, of what the goal of God is—John 14:21; Acts 26:16; 2 Tim. 4:8.
- F. God's appearing to us and His transfusing Himself into us issue in our living by faith for His perfect will to build up the church as the Body of Christ, consummating in the New Jerusalem—Gen. 12:7-8; 13:3-4, 18; Rom. 1:17; 4:16-17; Heb. 12:1-2a; Matt. 16:18; Rom. 12:1-2; Rev. 21:2.
- G. "By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going" (Heb. 11:8); this afforded Abraham constant opportunity to exercise his faith to trust in God for His instant leading, taking God's presence as the map for his traveling (Exo. 33:14-16).

III. If we would walk in the steps of Abraham's faith, we must be those who live the life of the altar and the tent—Gen. 12:7-8; 13:3-4, 18:

- A. God's appearing and transfusing issue in our consecration, causing us to build an altar, live in a tent, and live totally for God; when we meet God Himself, we have the power to deny ourselves; the denying of the self ceases to be optional when we have met God; no man can see God and live—Exo. 33:20; Job 42:5; Matt. 5:8; 1 John 3:2-3.
- B. An altar is for worshipping God by offering all that we are and have to God for His purpose; building an altar means that our life is for God, that God is our life, and that the meaning of our life is God—Gen. 8:20-21a; Exo. 29:18-22.
- C. Abraham's dwelling in a tent testified that he did not belong to the world but lived the life of a sojourner on the earth, sojourning by faith, as in a foreign land—Heb. 11:9-10:
 - 1. The tent is the issue of the altar; the altar and the tent are interrelated and cannot be separated; all the things we possess must pass through the altar; they are given back to us by the Lord to meet our need in the world.
 - 2. We may use the things that we possess, but they must not govern us; we can have them and let them go; they can be given, and they can be taken away—this is the principle of the tent life.
 - 3. Erecting a tent is an expression, a declaration, that we do not belong to this world, that we belong to another country; our real country is a better country, a heavenly one, the heavenly New Jerusalem—vv. 13-16, 10; 12:22; Rev. 21:2.

4. Abraham's tent was a miniature of the New Jerusalem; the Bible ends with a tent; the New Jerusalem is the ultimate tent, the ultimate tabernacle, in the universe—vv. 2-3.
 5. As we are living in the tent of the church life as the reality of the Tent of Meeting, we are waiting for its ultimate consummation—the ultimate Tent of Meeting, the New Jerusalem—1 Tim. 3:15; Lev. 1:1; Heb. 11:9-10; Rev. 21:2-3.
- D. Abraham had his failures, and there was the forsaking of the altar and the tent; however, with him there was a recovery, and recovery is a matter of returning to the altar and the tent with calling on the name of the Lord—Gen. 12:9-10; 13:3-4; Rom. 10:12-13; 12:1-2:
1. Eventually, at Hebron Abraham's tent became a place where he had fellowship with God and where God could fellowship with him—Gen. 13:18.
 2. At Hebron God was revealed to Abraham as the God with His human friendship so that He might gain Abraham to be His intercessor for the rescue of His backslidden believer, for the bringing forth of Christ, and for the destruction of the works of the devil in His chosen people—James 2:23; 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; Gen. 18; 1 John 5:16a; Gal. 4:19; 1 John 3:8.

IV. To live by faith, as Abraham did, is to cooperate with Christ in His heavenly ministry, not only by living a life of the altar and the tent but also by fighting for the brother—Gen. 12:7-8; 14:1-24; Rom. 4:12:

- A. Lot made the mistake of separating himself from Abraham and moving his tent as far as Sodom (Gen. 13:5-12); “now the men of Sodom were very wicked and sinful toward Jehovah” (v. 13).
- B. To leave Abraham was to leave God's goal and God's protection (Phil. 3:17; 1 Cor. 4:16-17; Heb. 13:7); we need to join ourselves to and follow the proper persons in God's economy so that we may be kept in the line of life and the flow of the Lord's move (1 Cor. 15:33; Prov. 13:20; 2 Tim. 1:15-18; 2:22).
- C. Because the land around Sodom was rich, Lot journeyed toward Sodom; eventually, he moved into the city, lived there, and settled there; under God's sovereignty Sodom was conquered, and Lot was taken captive—Gen. 14:12; cf. Jer. 2:13.
- D. Abraham did not count the weak point of his brother and did not take pleasure in Lot's suffering and calamity; as far as Abraham was concerned, it was a shame for him to see that his brother had been captured—1 John 5:16a; Prov. 10:12; James 5:19-20.
- E. When Abraham received the information about Lot's capture, he made a strong decision to fight for Lot, and he prayed, lifting up his hand to Jehovah, God the Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth—Gen. 14:14, 22; 1 Tim. 2:8.
- F. Abraham decided to take his three hundred eighteen men and fight against the four kings and their armies due to the fact that behind the scene, Melchizedek (meaning “king of righteousness”), king of Salem (meaning “peace”), was interceding for Lot, Abraham, and Abraham's fighting—Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:1-4, 25-26; 4:14-16; Rom. 8:26-29, 34.
- G. Melchizedek is a type of Christ as the kingly High Priest in His heavenly ministry, who is continually interceding for us and for those under our care to save us to the uttermost—Heb. 5:6, 10; 7:1-3, 25.
- H. The apostolic ministry in cooperation with Christ's heavenly ministry fights for the brother by interceding for the saints according to God and His economy and by ministering the processed God into the saints for their overcoming supply and enjoyment—v. 25; 8:2; Luke 22:31-32; John 21:15-17; Acts 6:4; Rev. 1:12-13; cf. Exo. 28:9-12, 15-21, 29-30:
 1. We must be those who shepherd others according to God (1 Pet. 5:1-2), that is, according to what God is in His attributes, such as love, light, holiness, and righteousness.

2. The elders need to realize that in their shepherding, they have to cover others' sins, to not take account of others' evils; whoever uncovers the defects, shortcomings, and sins of the members of the church is disqualified from the eldership.
3. If the co-workers and elders do not love the bad ones, eventually they will have nothing to do; the Lord Jesus said that He came as a Physician, not for the healthy ones but for the sick ones—Matt. 9:12; John 8:7-11; Matt. 27:38; Luke 23:42-43; 15:1; Matt. 9:10; 19:13-15.
4. We must follow the footsteps of the processed Triune God in seeking and gaining the fallen people—Luke 15:2-10, 17-18, 20.
5. When we visit people, we must have the Lord's presence, and His presence is the charming factor; if we are crucified persons in resurrection, the Triune God's presence goes with us wherever we go, and people will be attracted to the Lord.
6. To shepherd people, we must cherish them, which is to make them happy and to make them feel pleasant and comfortable; we must have a pleasant countenance when we contact people, not a cheerless countenance—Psa. 42:5, 11.
7. In shepherding people, we must also feed them with the all-inclusive Christ in His full ministry of three stages—incarnation, inclusion, and intensification; in order to nourish people with Christ, we first have to seek Christ, gain Christ, enjoy Christ, and participate in Christ—John 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rev. 4:5; 5:6; Phil. 3:8-14.
8. For eternity the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd us and guide us to springs of waters of life; when we are one with Him as the great Shepherd of the sheep to shepherd others, we are doing the work of eternity—Rev. 7:17.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

IN ABRAHAM IS SEEN THE LIVING BY FAITH

Hebrews 11:8-9 says, "By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed to go out to a place which he was about to receive for an inheritance, and he went out without knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt as a foreigner in the land of promise as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents."

Building an Altar

From Haran Abraham brought Sarah his wife, Lot his brother's son, and all their substance and people into the land of Canaan. When Abraham came to the place of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh, Jehovah appeared again to him, and there he built an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared to him (Gen. 12:7).

Pitching a Tent

After Abraham built an altar, he pitched a tent (Gen. 12:8). At Babel, the people first built a city and then erected a tower. But Abraham first built an altar and then erected a tent. This means that Abraham was for God. He first took care of the worship of God, his fellowship with God. Then he took care of his living. His dwelling in a tent also shows that he did not belong to the world, but lived the life of a sojourner on the earth.

Fighting for the Brother

Abraham's nephew, Lot, had separated himself from Abraham and dwelt in Sodom. Because of the fighting between the four kings and the five kings, Lot was taken captive. When Abraham heard this, he led forth his trained men who were born in his house, and fought against the four kings; he smote them and brought back all the goods. After his return, Melchisedec, king of Salem, met him with bread and wine and blessed him (Gen. 14:18). Melchisedec as the priest of the Most High God is a type

of Christ as God's High Priest (Heb. 7:1-3, 16-17). Christ today is the High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec. He is always living to intercede for us and to nourish us with bread and wine. (*Truth Lessons— Level One*, vol. 1, pp. 88-89)

THE TRANSFUSION OF GOD

I feel the need to share more about the subjective experience of justification. In my spirit I am burdened that Romans 4 be fully opened to the Lord's people. As I have said already, Romans 4 is a deep chapter, far deeper than we realize. It presents Abraham's experience with God. Abraham is an example of the experience of God's called ones with God. We do not have the adequate human language to describe such an experience. After considering this matter very seriously, I have selected the word transfuse to help us understand the interaction between God and man.

The application of electricity depends on the fuse, and we may say that the power of electricity is applied through the fuse. This is transfusion. The heavenly electricity is far away in the heavens, but the place where this electricity must be applied is here on earth. If this divine electricity is to come to us, we need a transfusion. Thus, God transfuses Himself into us. Once we have this transfusion, we will experience a spiritual infusion as God's essence infiltrates our being. This infusion of God's element will saturate and permeate us. Transfusion brings in infusion, and this infusion permeates us with God's element.

FAITH AS A REACTION

This permeation causes a reaction. The spiritual virtues and divine attributes that have been transmitted into us will react within us. The first reaction is believing. This is our faith. This is the highest definition of faith. Faith is not our natural ability or virtue. Faith is our reaction toward God, which results from God's transfusing Himself into us and infusing His divine elements into our being. When God's elements permeate our being, we react to Him, and this reaction is faith. Faith is not a human virtue; it is absolutely a reaction caused by a divine infusion, which saturates and permeates our being. Once we have such a faith, we can never lose it. It is deeper than our blood, for it has been infused into us and constituted into our being. Although we may try not to believe, we can never succeed. This is what the Bible means by believing in God.

If my memory is accurate, Paul never uses the term "by faith in Jesus." However, at least two or three times he mentions "the faith of Jesus," a phrase that troubles most translators. Some, finding it difficult to define such a phrase, have changed the preposition from "of " to "in." If we change the preposition, the phrase will read "faith in Jesus" and mean that we believe in Jesus by ourselves. This is not Paul's meaning. Paul means that we believe in the Lord Jesus by means of the Lord Jesus Himself as our faith. Since we do not have the ability to believe, we must take Christ as our believing ability. We need to believe in the Lord Jesus by His faith. I have tried to understand this for nearly forty years. In the past I explained faith as Christ working Himself into us. That was the best definition I had at the time. However, in the last few days the Lord has given me a better term: faith is our reaction to God produced by His transfusion, infusion, and saturation.

THE PROCESS OF TRANSFUSION

How is this transfusion accomplished? God, as the heavenly electricity, comes to His chosen ones. For example, God came to Abraham by appearing to him. If we study Genesis 11 through 24, including the record in Acts 7, we find that God appeared to Abraham several times. Acts 7:2 says that the God of glory appeared to Abraham. It is sure that Abraham was attracted by the appearing of the God of glory. To be attracted simply means that God transfused Himself into Abraham without his realizing it or being conscious of it. This is similar to the radium treatment practiced in modern medicine. The patient is placed under the X-ray, unconscious of the beams that are penetrating him. God is the strongest radium. If we sit under Him for an hour, He will transfuse Himself into us. This transfusion will cause

infusion, saturation, and permeation.

THE TRANSFUSION IN THE GOSPEL

In any proper gospel preaching there should be such a transfusion, the transfusion of Christ into people. How can Christ be transfused into us? It is by the preaching of the gospel. Whenever we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in a normal way, there will be an appearing of the living Christ, and this appearing will transfuse Christ into people.

I can confirm this by my own experience. Although I was born in China and learned the teachings of Confucius, Confucius had no attraction for me. Christianity as a religion did not appeal to me either. When I was nineteen years old, the Lord sent a young sister to my town to preach the gospel. I was curious to see her. As I sat in the meeting place and heard her singing and speaking, the glory of God appeared, and I was attracted. No one had to convince me to believe. As I listened to her, God transfused Himself into me, and this transfusion overwhelmed and conquered me, causing a very positive reaction. Coming out of the meeting hall and walking along the road, I lifted up my eyes to the heavens and said, “God, You know I am an ambitious young man. But, even if the people promise me the whole world to be my empire, I would refuse it. I want to take You. From this day onward I want to serve You. I would like to be a poor preacher going from village to village, telling people how good Jesus is.” In this way the living Jesus was transfused into my being. Immediately I reacted to God, and God reacted back to me. My reaction to God was my believing in Him. That was my faith. God’s reaction back to me was to justify me, to give His righteousness with peace and joy to me. The righteousness of God reacted to me, and from that time on I had that righteousness. Christ was made the righteousness of God to me. Thus I had peace and joy, and I was filled with hope. I had been justified by God. God had called me out of everything other than Himself.

Once Christ has transfused Himself into you, you can never escape; you must believe in Him. I am familiar with many cases that occurred under my own gospel preaching. Some people said, “I simply don’t know what happened to me. After I listened to that preacher the first time and came home, I said that I didn’t want anything to do with Christ, that I did not like Jesus. But something got into me. I tried to cast it away, but I couldn’t do it. Although I don’t want to go back, something within me urges me to go hear him again and again.” What is this? This is the effect of the transfusing of Christ into people. Out of this transfusion a reaction comes—believing in Jesus by the faith of Jesus.

GOD’S APPEARING TO ABRAHAM

God appeared to Abraham again and again. Many of us have held the wrong concept about Abraham, the concept that he was a giant in faith. When I heard this as a young Christian, I was frightened, thinking to myself, “Forget about that. I can never be a giant of faith.” Later, as I considered the history of Abraham, I realized that he was not the giant of faith. The only giant of faith is God Himself. God, as the giant of faith, transfused Himself into him. After Abraham had spent time in God’s presence, he could not help believing in Him, because he had been transfused with God. Thus, Abraham was attracted to God and reacted to Him in believing. His reaction was his believing. Suppose a poor man visited Abraham and said, “Abraham, I know you don’t have a child. Next year I will enable you to have a child born of your wife.” Abraham would have driven such a man away from him, telling him not to talk nonsense. Who actually appeared to Abraham? The God of glory. The incident in Genesis 15 was not God’s first appearing to him. Several other appearances preceded it.

The first appearing was that recorded in Acts 7. Two more appearances are found in Genesis 12: in the first of these (vv. 1-3) God told Abraham to leave his country, his kindred, and his father’s house; in the second one (vv. 7-8) God promised Abraham to give the land to his seed. After this, Abraham, who had little experience in believing, fell into Egypt. God’s fourth appearing to Abraham was in Genesis 13:14-17, when He told Abraham to lift up his eyes and look in every direction at the land. Therefore, the appearing of God in Genesis 15:1-7 was the fifth; it was nothing new to Abraham. God had

appeared to Abraham repeatedly, and Abraham had experienced the riches of God's appearing, coming to have confidence in them. During the first four appearances, God's element had been transfused and infused into Abraham's being. When God appeared to Abraham, He did not leave suddenly. He stayed with Abraham for a length of time. How long did God remain with Abraham in Genesis 18? He stayed with him for about half a day, conversing with him for hours as with an intimate friend. Throughout that whole visitation Abraham was infused with God. During the fifth appearing (Gen. 15) God told Abraham that the number of his seed would be like the stars of heaven. As a result of the fifth appearing, Abraham had experienced such a rich infusion of God that he believed. "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Rom. 4:3; Gen. 15:6).

Abraham's faith did not come from his natural ability and it did not originate with himself. His believing in God was a reaction to the heavenly radium, a response to the divine infusion. Figuratively speaking, Abraham's believing was simply God working like radium within him. What is the proper faith? Genuine faith is the working of God within us. This is why God counted Abraham's faith as righteousness. It seemed that God was saying, "This faith is something of Me. It corresponds to Me. This is Abraham's righteousness before Me." What was that righteousness? It was the righteousness of God. (*Life-study of Romans*, pp. 90-94)

ABRAHAM—A LIFE BY FAITH

The Altar—Its Significance

The First Altar

An altar means that we do not keep anything for ourselves. An altar means that we realize that we are here on earth for God. An altar means that our life is for God, that God is our life, and that the meaning of our life is God. So we put everything on the altar. We are not here making a name for ourselves; we are putting everything on the altar for the sake of His name.

If you check with your experience, you will see that immediately after you were called, God appeared to you again, and you said, "Lord, from now on everything is Yours. All that I am, all that I have, all that I can do and am going to do is for You." I can still recall what happened on the afternoon that I was saved. As I went out of that church building and walked along the street, I lifted up my eyes to heaven and said, "God, from today on everything is for You." That was a real consecration. In a spiritual sense, it was the building of an altar. I believe that many of you reading this message have had such an experience. When we received God's calling, we were crazy, not caring about what would happen. Although we did not realize what it meant at the time, we promised the Lord that everything we had was for Him. When I said this to the Lord that day on the street, I did not realize what it involved. When after a few years I found myself in some difficulties, the Lord within me said, "Don't you remember what you said that afternoon as you walked along the street? Didn't you say, 'O God, from today on everything is for You'?" When I signed the contract, I did not know what was involved. But it was too late to repent; the contract had already been signed. To tell the Lord that everything is for Him is the real building of an altar. We all can testify how sweet is the sensation and how intimate is the fellowship whenever we tell the Lord that everything is for Him. At that time, we come deeply into the Lord Himself.

Although we may tell the Lord that everything we are and have is for Him, we may forget it a few days later. But the One who called us will never forget. He has an excellent memory. Often He will come to us and remind us of what we have said to Him. He may say, "Don't you remember what you said to Me that day?" This is not a doctrine; it is a real experience. Unless you have not been called, you are not an exception. As long as you are a called one, I have the complete assurance that you have had this kind of experience. The Lord did reappear to you, and at that reappearing you were crazy, promising to give the Lord everything, without considering the meaning of the involvement. You simply consecrated yourself to Him. You did not realize the meaning of what you promised. I thank

God that we were not clear about this when we did it. We did not realize how much we became involved with God as a result of speaking one short sentence. We were bound by it. He is God. He is the calling One, and we are the called ones. It is all of Him. Even if we want to be crazy for Him, in ourselves we do not have the incentive to do it. But once He appears to us, we are crazy and say, "O Lord, everything is Yours. Take it. Lord, do what You want. I offer everything to You." Such a time of offering ourselves to the Lord is like a dream. Later we wake up and begin to realize what it involves.

In the early days of my ministry I was burdened to help people to consecrate themselves. Although I gave a lot of teaching about consecration, I did not see much result. My teaching did not work very well. Eventually, I learned that you cannot help people to consecrate themselves by teaching them. It is not teaching that causes people to consecrate themselves to the Lord; it is the Lord's appearing that motivates them to do this. If we can help people to meet the Lord and come into His presence, that will be sufficient. We do not need to tell them to consecrate themselves to God or to offer everything to the Lord on the altar. Once God appears to people, nothing can stop them from consecrating themselves. Spontaneously and automatically, they will say, "Lord, everything is Yours. From now on everything is for You." Have you not had this kind of experience? Have you not laid everything you are and have upon the altar for God and His purpose?

The Second Altar

After Abraham built an altar to the Lord at Moreh, he traveled through the land. God did not give him just one little spot; He gave him a spacious land. In his travels, Abraham came to a place that was between Bethel and Ai. Bethel was on the west and Ai was on the east. Here, between Bethel and Ai, Abraham built another altar (12:8; 13:3-4). Bethel means the house of God, and Ai means the heap of ruins. Bethel and Ai stand in contrast one to another. What does this contrast mean? It means that in the eyes of the called ones only God's house is worthwhile. Everything else is just a heap of ruins. The principle is the same with us today. On the one hand, we have Bethel, God's house, the church life. Opposite to this is a heap of ruins. Everything that is contrary to the church life is a heap of ruins. In the eyes of God's called ones, everything other than the church life is a heap of ruins because the called ones look at the world situation from God's point of view. This point of view is absolutely different from the world's point of view. According to the worldly viewpoint, everything in the world is high, good, and wonderful, but, from the point of view of God's called ones, everything opposite to the house of God is a heap of ruins.

Firstly, we consecrate ourselves at Moreh. Then we consecrate ourselves at the place that is between the church life and the heap of ruins. As far as we are concerned, only the house of God is worthwhile. Everything other than this is a heap of ruins. Between the house of God and the heap of ruins we build an altar that we might fellowship with God, worship Him, and serve Him.

The Third Altar

Abraham built the third altar at Mamre of Hebron (13:18). Mamre means strength, and Hebron means fellowship, communion, or friendship. According to Genesis 18:1, it was at Mamre that God came to visit Abraham. In that visit God not only appeared to him but stayed with him for quite a long time, even feasting with him. We shall see more about this when we come to that chapter. Although both Moreh and the place between Bethel and Ai were good, neither one was the place where Abraham stayed for constant fellowship with the Lord. The place where Abraham stayed for such constant fellowship with the Lord was Mamre of Hebron.

We all need to maintain a constant fellowship with the Lord. This does not happen by accident; neither should it occur occasionally. It must be constant. Perhaps some years ago you built an altar to the Lord. This is good, but what has happened since then? You may say that you built an altar two years ago, but how about today? Many of us have had the experience at Moreh but have not had the experience at Mamre. I believe that Abraham's life was mostly spent at Hebron, the place where he

could have constant fellowship with the Lord. There, at Hebron, he built the third altar. We all need to build at least three altars: the first at Moreh, the second between Bethel and Ai, and the third at Mamre in Hebron. We need to build an altar at Mamre in Hebron so that we may worship God, serve Him, and have constant fellowship with Him. This is the experience of the third altar, the altar in Hebron.

The Tent—the Expression

Because All the Things He Had Were for God and He Trusted in God

After Abraham built an altar, he pitched a tent (12:7-8). At Babel, the people firstly built a city and then erected a tower. But Abraham firstly built an altar and then erected a tent. This means that Abraham was for God. The first thing he did was to take care of the worship of God, of his fellowship with God. Secondly, he took care of his living. The tent was for Abraham's living. Abraham did not take care of his living first. That was secondary. With Abraham, the primary matter was to consecrate everything to God, to worship and serve God, and to have fellowship with God. Only then did Abraham pitch a tent for his living. Abraham's dwelling in a tent indicated that he did not belong to the world but was a testimony to the people (Heb. 11:9).

At the Place of Testimony

Abraham firstly pitched his tent at the place between Bethel and Ai (12:8; 13:3). That was the place where God's house was and where he began his testimony in expressing God by fellowshiping with Him. His altar was the beginning of his testimony for God to the world, whereas his tent was the completion of his testimony to the world for God. His tent was a miniature of the tabernacle built by his descendants in the wilderness, which was called the "tabernacle of testimony" (Exo. 38:21). Since his tent was pitched by Bethel, in a sense it may be considered as the house of God for God's testimony on earth.

At the Place of Fellowship

Later, Abraham removed his tent to Hebron, which means fellowship (13:18). His tent firstly was a testimony for God to the world and then it became the center where he had fellowship with God. This is strongly proved by what occurred in chapter eighteen when God came to stay with him in the tent at Mamre in Hebron. By Abraham's pitching a tent God had a place on earth where He could communicate and fellowship with man. His tent brought God from heaven to earth. All of us, God's called ones, should pitch a tent. On the one hand, such a tent is a testimony of God to the world; on the other hand, it is a place of fellowship with God to bring God from heaven to earth.

Do not think that this matter of a tent is a small thing. Later, when Abraham's descendants were called out of Egypt and entered into the wilderness, God commanded them to build a tent and in front of the tent He commanded them to build an altar (Exo. 26:1; 27:1). There, in Exodus, we see an altar with a tent, a tabernacle. That tabernacle was God's house on earth. Abraham's tent was also God's house on earth. In Genesis 18 we can see that God came and stayed with Abraham in his tent. At that time, Abraham was a priest offering sacrifices to God. His building an altar and offering sacrifices to God proved that he functioned as a priest. God's intention is that all of His called ones should be priests. We are priests. We do not need others to offer sacrifices for us. We must do it ourselves. When Abraham was feasting with God in his tent, he was the high priest, and the inner part of his tent was the Holy of Holies. God was there. By this we can see that Abraham's tent was a prefigure of the tabernacle built by Abraham's descendants in the wilderness as the dwelling place for God and for the priests. Here in Genesis we see a priest named Abraham who lived with God in his tent. At the side of this tent there was an altar.

Sojourning by Faith as in a Strange Country

Do not forget that Abraham's history is yours. Do you not have a tent where you always have the Lord's presence? The worldly people do not have such a tent. They only have a great city. The only thing that the worldly people can see is their great city. They say, "Look at my corporation. Look at my education, my attainment. Look at how many things I have." But we can say to the worldly people, "You have everything, but there is one thing that you don't have—God's presence. You do not have the tent—you have the city of Babel. All that you have is a part of the great Babylon." Whether we are high-class people or low-class people does not mean very much. All that matters is that wherever we are we have a tent with God's presence. When we have a tent with God's presence, we have the deep sensation within that nothing here on earth is lasting. Everything is temporary. We are looking to eternity. The banks, the corporations, the attainments—all are temporal and mean nothing. We have nothing constant on this earth. I just like to have a tent with God's presence. I like to live in such a situation. We may say to the worldly people, "Dr. So-and-so, I don't have as much as you have, but I have the one thing that you don't have—God's presence. I don't have to wait for eternity to have God's presence. I have His presence right now in my tent. My surroundings are a tent, a miniature of the New Jerusalem. This may not be worthwhile in your eyes, but in God's eyes it means a great deal." This is what it means to pitch a tent.

Whenever we answer God's calling and God reappears to us and we build an altar for God, telling Him that everything we are and have is for Him, we shall immediately erect a tent. Spontaneously, people will see that this is an expression, a declaration, that we do not belong to this world. By pitching a tent we declare that we belong to another country. We do not belong to this country; we are looking for a better one. We do not like this country, this earth, this world. We expect to come into another country. We are sojourning by faith as in a strange country (Heb. 11:9).

Waiting with Expectation for a City with Foundations

Hebrews 11:10 says that Abraham "waited for the city which has the foundations, whose Architect and Maker is God." This city which has foundations is undoubtedly the New Jerusalem, which has solid foundations laid and built by God (Rev. 21:14, 19-20). While Abraham was living in a tent without any foundations, he was looking and waiting for a city with foundations. But I do not believe that Abraham knew that he was waiting for the New Jerusalem. Even many Christians do not know that what they are waiting for is the New Jerusalem. But we have to be clear that we are living in the tent of the church life today, waiting for its ultimate consummation, which will be the New Jerusalem—the city of God with foundations.

Living in a Shadow of the New Jerusalem

Abraham's tent was a miniature of the New Jerusalem, which will be the ultimate tabernacle of God in the universe (Rev. 21:2-3). As he lived in that tent, he was living in a shadow of the New Jerusalem. While he was living there with God, he was waiting for a city, a city that eventually will be the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem, the eternal tabernacle, will replace that temporary tent in which Abraham lived. Abraham's tent was a seed of God's eternal dwelling place. This seed grew in the tabernacle erected by his descendants in the wilderness (Exo. 40), and its harvest will be the New Jerusalem, the tabernacle of God with man. God still needs to have such a seed in all of us. We all need to be those who live in a tent and who look forward to a better country, a country in which there will be the eternal tabernacle where God and we, we and God, will live together for eternity. Abraham's interest was altogether in a better country. Although God had told him that He would give the land to Abraham and his descendants, Abraham did not care for that. He was looking for another country and for a city with foundations. Eventually, the Bible tells us that this better country is the new heaven and the new earth and that the city with foundations is the New Jerusalem, the eternal dwelling place for God and for all His called ones.

Today we are repeating the life and history of Abraham. Once there was only one Abraham; now

there are many. The church life today is the harvest of the life and history of Abraham. Abraham's life by faith is presently being repeated among us. We all are here building an altar and pitching a tent. Look at the church life: we have an altar and a real tabernacle. This is a picture of the coming New Jerusalem where we shall spend eternity with God.

The Bible ends with a tent. The New Jerusalem is the ultimate tent, the ultimate tabernacle, in the universe. Maybe one day Abraham will meet with God in the New Jerusalem, and God will say, "Abraham, don't you remember that day when we feasted together in your tent? Your tent was a miniature of this eternal tabernacle." Abraham's tent was a seed. The growth of that seed is in Exodus and its harvest is in Revelation 21. In principle, there is no difference between Abraham's tent, and the New Jerusalem, the ultimate tent. If I were Abraham meeting with God in the New Jerusalem, I would say, "Lord, I remember the day You came to my tent. Now I come to Your tent." (*Life-study of Genesis*, pp. 556-563)

Fighting for the Brother

In the matter of the capture of Lot, God was sovereign. Genesis 14:13 says, "And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew." The four kings had captured Sodom and all of its food supply, but one person who escaped told Abraham that Lot had been captured. Do you believe that this happened by accident? While so many others were captured, this one escaped. That person was preserved by God's sovereignty. As we shall see, it must have happened because of the intercession behind the scene. The one who escaped did not run away but came purposely to Abraham and told him that Lot had been captured.

Unlike us, Abraham did not count the weak point of his brother and did not take pleasure in Lot's suffering and calamity. Abraham did not say, "Lot should never have separated himself from me. I knew this was going to happen. He got what he deserved. I believe that God is sovereign and that Lot's suffering comes from God. Be at peace and go home. God will preserve Lot." I believe that many of us would have responded in this way. But Abraham was different. When he received this information, he made a strong decision to fight for Lot (14:14). As we shall see, Abraham prayed. In verse 22 he told the king of Sodom that before he went out to war he lifted up his hand to God. How could Abraham have prayed and made such a decision? It must have been due to the fact that someone behind the scene was interceding for him. I believe that the intercessor knew of the fighting that was going on and of the capture of Lot. As a result of this intercession, Abraham made a brief and bold decision.

Abraham decided to take his three hundred eighteen men and fight against the four kings and their armies. The four kings must have had several armies, the number of men in which must have been much greater than the number of Abraham's men. How could Abraham have fought against them with such a small number? Moreover, they were kings and generals who had fought many battles, and Abraham was a layman. How could he fight against those who were experts in war? How could he defeat them with such a small number? Nevertheless, Abraham was bold, having confidence in God.

As far as Abraham was concerned, it was a shame for him to see that his brother had been captured. It is the same in the church today. It is a shame for us to see that any brother or sister has been captured. If a brother in the brothers' house is captured and you see it, that is a shame. You should not tolerate it but should say, "I cannot bear with this. I must rise up and do something about it!" This is what Abraham did.

Abraham's bold decision must have been due to the fact that behind the scene someone was interceding for him. Perhaps you are thinking that there is no record of this in the Bible. Neither is there a record of Melchisedec's parents or genealogy. But do you believe that he had no parents or genealogy? Certainly he did, yet the Bible does not mention them. Many things behind the scene in this chapter are not recorded. I do believe that behind the scene there was some intercession. Someone concerned for God's interest on earth was interceding for Lot, Abraham, and Abraham's fighting.

We have seen that Lot's defeat did not begin at Sodom. In the same principle, Abraham's victory

did not start with the slaughter of the kings. Abraham's victory began when Lot departed from him. Abraham had been called by God, and he answered that calling by coming forward to the very land that God intended to give him. At that time, however, Abraham had nearly no experience. All he had was a little experience in answering God's calling and coming forward to the place where God intended him to be. As we saw in the last message, a famine arose as a test to Abraham, and he was not able to withstand that test. Abraham failed God, trying by himself to make a living at the sacrifice of his wife. Under God's sovereign teaching, Abraham learned a great deal by that failure. Abraham learned that God is sovereign over everything and that He knows everything concerning His people. Everything related to God's called ones is in His hand. Abraham saw that, experienced it, and came fully into it.

Afterward, when the problem arose between Abraham and Lot, Abraham was victorious. His victory began at that time because he had learned the basic lesson in his going down to Egypt. We all must learn such a basic lesson. After you have been called and have answered God's calling by coming to the place where He intends you to be, the first basic lesson that God will teach you is that, as a called one of God, everything concerning you is under God's hand. God is sovereign over you. This was the basic lesson that Abraham learned by going down to Egypt. After learning that lesson, he gained the victory with Lot. When the problem arose with Lot, Abraham didn't take his own choice; he knew that his choice was in the hands of God. That was the beginning of Abraham's victory.

Then the time came when Abraham could show the whole universe that he was on God's side. When Melchisedec appeared, two special titles of God are revealed: the Most High God and the Possessor of heaven and earth (v. 19). Both Melchisedec and Abraham spoke of God in this way. Abraham said, "I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth" (14:22). Abraham could say, "By going down to Egypt I have learned the lesson that my God, the One who called me, is the Possessor of both heaven and earth. I don't need to have any choice. My choice is just He. I cannot bear seeing that my brother has been captured. This is a shame to me. I must take him back. I don't care for the number of soldiers and I don't care for the kings and armies. I don't care that I have less than they do. My burden is to get my brother back. If I don't do this, it is a shame to me."

In fighting for his brother, Abraham risked his life. It was not a small thing for him to risk his life in order to rescue his captured brother. But he did it. The fight went smoothly, and Abraham pursued the enemy from the south all the way to Dan in the north. His victory must have been the result of the intercession behind the scene.

Abraham gained the victory by trusting in God. He had confidence in God because he had learned to know Him. Likewise, we all must learn to know God. We must learn that, even today, the earth is God's. God is the landlord. He is not only the landlord but also the heavenlord. Both the heaven and the earth belong to our Father, the One who has called us. We need to have such confidence in Him. If we lack this confidence, we are already defeated and shall become a Lot.

Why was Lot defeated? Because, unlike Abraham, he did not learn the lesson that God is the Possessor of heaven and earth. Even after he had been rescued, there is no record that he thanked Abraham or said a word to the Lord. Lot was absolutely out of function. According to the following chapters, he went back to Sodom. Although his capture was a warning to him not to return to Sodom, he still went back, even after his capture and rescue. We see from this that once you have been defeated it is very difficult to keep yourself away from that defeat.

Although Lot had been defeated, Abraham was victorious. This victory was the peak of his outward experience. Later on, God came in to give him some inward experiences. (*Life- study of Genesis*, pp. 579-583)