

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; Psa. 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.