

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.