

COOPERATING WITH THE HEAVENLY MINISTRY OF THE ASCENDED CHRIST

(Lord's Day—Second Morning Session)

Message Eight

Cooperating with Christ in His Heavenly Ministry by Running with Endurance the Race Set before Us, Looking Away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of Our Faith

JL Hymns 1206

Scripture Reading: Heb. 11:1, 6; 12:1-2; Rom. 10:17

- Heb 11:1 Now faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
- Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to Him, for he who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
- Heb 12:1 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 12:2 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.
- Rom 10:17 So faith comes out of hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

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):
- Num 9:15 And on the day that the tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the Tent of the Testimony; and in the evening it was like the appearance of fire over the tabernacle until morning.
- Num 9:16 So it was always; the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.
- Num 9:17 And whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tent, then after that the children of Israel set out; and in the place where the cloud settled, there the children of Israel encamped.
- Num 9:18 At the commandment of Jehovah the children of Israel set out, and at the commandment of Jehovah they encamped; as long as the cloud settled upon the tabernacle, they remained encamped.
- Num 9:19 Even when the cloud extended its time over the tabernacle for many days, the children of Israel kept the charge of Jehovah and did not set out.
- Num 9:20 If sometimes the cloud was upon the tabernacle a few days, according to the commandment of Jehovah they remained encamped; then at the commandment of Jehovah they set out.
- Num 9:21 If sometimes the cloud remained from evening until morning, when the cloud was taken up in the morning, they set out; or if it remained a day and a night, when the cloud was taken up, they set out.
- Num 9:22 Whether it was two days or a month or a longer time that the cloud extended its time over the tabernacle and settled above it, the children of Israel remained encamped and did not set out; but when it was taken up, they set out.
- Exo 13:21 And Jehovah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them on the way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might go by day and by night.
- Exo 13:22 Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night departed from before the people.
- Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

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.
 - 1 Cor 14:24 But if all prophesy and some unbeliever or unlearned person enters, he is convicted by all, he is examined by all;
 - 1 Cor 14:25 The secrets of his heart become manifest; and so falling on his face, he will worship God, declaring that indeed God is among you.
 - Psa 36:8 They are saturated with the fatness of Your house, / And You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures.
 - Psa 36:9 For with You is the fountain of life; / In Your light we see light.
 - Psa 16:11 You will make known to me the path of life; / In Your presence is fullness of joy; / At Your right hand there are pleasures forever.
- B. The Christian life is a race; every saved Christian must run the race to win the prize (1 Cor. 9:24), 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 Cor 9:24 Do you not know that those who run on a racecourse all run, but one receives the prize? Run in this way, that you may lay hold.
 - Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves; it is the gift of God;
 - 1 Cor 3:15 If anyone's work is consumed, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.
 - Heb 10:35 Do not cast away therefore your boldness, which has great reward.
 - 1 Cor 3:14 If anyone's work which he has built upon the foundation remains, he will receive a reward;
 - 1 Cor 9:26 I therefore run in this way, not as though without a clear aim; I box in this way, not as though beating the air;
 - 1 Cor 9:27 But I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest perhaps having preached to others, I myself may become disapproved.
 - Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,
 - Phil 3:14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.
 - 2 Tim 4:7 I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.
 - 2 Tim 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing.
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.
 - Heb 10:26 For when we sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice of bulls and goats for sins,
- 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:
- 2 Thes 3:5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the endurance of Christ.

1. This is our love toward God, issuing from the love of God (1 John 4:19), which has been poured out in our hearts (Rom. 5:5).
 1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us.
 Rom 5:5 And hope does not put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.
2. This is to endure with the endurance of Christ that we have enjoyed and experienced—cf. Rev. 1:9.
 Rev 1:9 I John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

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 need to look away unto Jesus with undivided attention by turning away from every other object; Jesus is the Author of faith, the Originator, the Inaugurator, the source, and the cause of faith:
 1. The wonderful Jesus, who is enthroned in heaven and crowned with glory and honor (2:9), is the greatest attraction in the universe.
 Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little inferior to the angels because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of everything.
 2. He is like an immense magnet drawing all His seekers to Him—S. S. 1:4; Hosea 11:4; Jer. 31:3:
 - S.S. 1:4 Draw me; we will run after you - The king has brought me into his chambers - / We will be glad and rejoice in you; / We will extol your love more than wine. / Rightly do they love you.
 - Hosea 11:4 I drew them with cords of a man, / With bands of love; And I was to them like those / Who lift off the yoke on their jaws; / And I gently caused them to eat.
 - Jer 31:3 Jehovah appeared to me from afar, saying, / Indeed I have loved you with an eternal love, / Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.
 - a. 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.
 Psa 27:4 One thing I have asked from Jehovah; / That do I seek: / To dwell in the house of Jehovah / All the days of my life, / To behold the beauty of Jehovah, / And to inquire in His temple.
 - b. Without such a charming object, how could we look away from so many distracting things on earth?
- B. The faith of the believers is actually not their own faith but Christ entering into them to be their faith—Rom. 3:22 and footnote 1; Gal. 2:16 and footnote 1:
 - Rom 3:22 Even the righteousness of God through the ¹faith of Jesus Christ to all those who believe, for there is no distinction;
 - note 1 Or, faith in Jesus Christ. This faith refers to the faith of Jesus Christ in us, which has become the faith by which we believe in Him, as in v. 26; Gal. 2:16, 20; 3:22; Eph. 3:12; and Phil. 3:9.
 Faith has an object, and it issues from its object. This object is Jesus, who is God incarnate. When man hears Him, knows Him, appreciates Him, and treasures Him, He causes faith to be generated in man, enabling man to believe in Him. Thus, He becomes the faith in man by which man believes in Him. Hence, this faith becomes the faith in Him, and it is also the faith that belongs to Him.
 In God's New Testament economy, God desires that man believe in Jesus, who is God incarnate. If man does not believe in Him, he commits the unique sin before God (John 16:9). However, if man believes in Him, he is righteous to the uttermost before God, and God reckons this faith as his righteousness. At the same time, this faith brings its object, that is, this One who is God incarnate, into those who believe in

Him. He is God's righteousness, and God has given Him as righteousness to those who are indwelt by Him (Jer. 23:6). All this is out of, and depends on, the faith that is in Him and of Him (Heb. 12:2).

Gal 2:16 And knowing that a man is not justified out of works of law, but through ¹faith in Jesus Christ, we also have believed into Christ Jesus that we might be justified out of faith in Christ and not out of the works of law, because out of the works of law no flesh will be justified.

note 1 Lit., faith of Jesus Christ. See note 22¹ in Rom. 3. *Faith in Jesus Christ* denotes an organic union with Him through believing. This is related to the believers' appreciation of the person of the Son of God as the most precious One. The believers are infused with the preciousness of Christ through the gospel preached to them. This Christ becomes in them the faith by which they believe and the capacity to believe through their appreciation of Him. This faith creates an organic union in which they and Christ are one.

1. Our believing is our appreciation of Christ as a reaction to His attraction—Rom. 10:17.

Rom 10:17 So faith comes out of hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

2. In our natural man we have no believing ability; we do not have faith by ourselves.

3. The faith by which we are saved is the precious faith that we have received from the Lord, the God-allotted faith—2 Pet. 1:1; Col. 1:12.

2 Pet 1:1 Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have been allotted faith equally precious as ours in the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

Col 1:12 Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you for a share of the allotted portion of the saints in the light;

4. When we look away unto Jesus, He as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) transfuses us with Himself, His believing element.

1 Cor 15:45b ... the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

5. This faith is not of ourselves but of Him who imparts Himself as the believing element into us that He may believe for us.

6. Hence, Christ Himself is our faith; we live by Him as our faith, that is, by His faith (Gal. 2:20), not our own.

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

C. 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:

Heb 11:1 Now faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

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:

2 Cor 4:13 And having the same spirit of faith according to that which is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we also believe, therefore we also speak,

a. We must exercise our spirit of faith, our mingled spirit, to believe and to speak the things we have experienced of the Lord.

b. Faith is in our spirit, which is mingled with the Holy Spirit, not in our mind; doubts are in our mind.

4. 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—v. 18:

2 Cor 4:18 Because we do not regard 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.

- a. The Christian life is a life of things unseen—Rom. 8:24-25; Heb. 11:27; 1 Pet. 1:8; Gal. 6:10.

Rom 8:24 For we were saved in hope. But a hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he sees?

Rom 8:25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly await it through endurance.

Heb 11:27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he persevered as one seeing the unseen One.

1 Pet 1:8 Whom having not seen, you love; into whom though not seeing Him at present, yet believing, you exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory,

Gal 6:10 So then, as we have the opportunity, let us do what is good toward all, but especially toward those of the household of the faith.

- b. The degradation of the church is the degradation from unseen things to seen things.

- c. The Lord's recovery is to recover His church from things seen to things unseen.

5. Faith assures us of the things not seen, convincing us of what we do not see; therefore, it is the evidence, the proof, of things unseen.

D. Faith is to believe that God is:

1. Without faith it is impossible to please God, to make God happy—Heb. 11:6a.

Heb 11:6a But without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to Him, ...

2. "He who comes forward to God must believe that He is"—v. 6b; cf. Gen. 5:22-24;

Heb 11:6b ... for he who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Gen 5:22 And Enoch walked with God after he had begotten Methuselah three hundred years, and he begot more sons and daughters.

Gen 5:23 And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty-five years.

Gen 5:24 And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

- a. 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.

John 8:58 Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Before Abraham came into being, I am.

Eccl 1:2 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; / Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.

- b. 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—Heb. 11:5.

Heb 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him. For before his translation he obtained the testimony that he had been well pleasing to God.

- c. 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.

Luke 9:23 And He said to them all, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

- d. 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.

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

- e. At his conversion the Lord told Saul of Tarsus, "I am Jesus"—Acts 9:5:

Acts 9:5 And he said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute.

1) 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."

2) Eventually, Saul was over, and Paul came up—13:9.

Acts 13:9 But Saul, who is also Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him

- f. This is faith—"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" (J. N. Darby).
- E. Jesus is the Perfecter, the Finisher, the Completer, of our faith—Heb. 12:2a:
 Heb 12:2a Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, ...
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.
 Heb 12:1 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,
 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:
 Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, 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. Faith in the progressing stage comes through our contacting the Triune God, who is faith in us—1 Thes. 5:17.
 1 Thes 5:17 Unceasingly pray,
 - 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.
 Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.
 Rom 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;
 2 Tim 2:22 But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.
 Eph 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,
 Eph 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,
 Heb 4:2 For indeed we have had the good news announced to us, even as they also; but the word heard did not profit them, not being mixed together with faith in those who heard.
 - 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.
 Rom 1:12 That is, that I with you may be encouraged among you through the faith which is in one another, both yours and mine.
 Philem 6 That the fellowship of your faith may become effective in the full knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ.
 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.
 1 John 5:4 For everything that has been begotten of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory which has overcome the world—our faith.
 John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
 2 Cor 4:13 And having the same spirit of faith according to that which is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we also believe, therefore we also speak,
 1 John 5:18 We know that everyone who is begotten of God does not sin, but he who has been begotten of God keeps himself, and the evil one does not touch him.
 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. 2:20;

Rom. 16:3-4; Acts 20:24; 1 Tim. 1:4; Heb. 12:3; cf. Judg. 8:4.

Luke 18:8 I tell you that He will carry out their avenging quickly. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?

Phil 2:20 For I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you;

Rom 16:3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,

Rom 16:4 Who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles;

Acts 20:24 But I consider my life of no account as if precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of God.

1 Tim 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

Heb 12:3 For compare Him who has endured such contradiction by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary, fainting in your souls.

Judg 8:4 Then Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed over, he and the three hundred men with him, weary yet pursuing.

F. 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:

Heb 12:2 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.

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 condemned by them to death.

Luke 24:25 And He said to them, O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!

Luke 24:26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into His glory?

John 12:23 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Rom 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;

John 16:20 Truly, truly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.

John 16:21 A woman, when she gives birth, has sorrow because her hour has come; but when she brings forth the little child, she no longer remembers the affliction because of the joy that a man has been born into the world.

John 16:22 Therefore you also now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you.

2. Therefore, God highly exalted Him to the heavens, seated Him at His right hand (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33-35), gave Him the name 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).

Mark 16:19 So then the Lord Jesus, after speaking to them, was taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God.

Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear.

Acts 2:34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand

Acts 2:35 Until I set Your enemies as a footstool for Your feet."

Phil 2:9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

Phil 2:10 That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

- Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.
- Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little inferior to the angels because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of everything.
3. If we look away unto Him as such a wonderful and all-inclusive One, He will minister heaven, life, and strength to us, transfusing and infusing us with all that He is, 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 and lead and bring us into glory—v. 10; 2 Cor. 3:16, 18; 1 Pet. 5:4; 2 Tim. 4:8.
- Heb 2:10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.
- 2 Cor 3:16 But whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.
- 2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.
- 1 Pet 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
- 2 Tim 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE FAITH OF THE BELIEVERS

I use the phrase *the faith of the believers* because the unbelieving sinners do not have faith. In ourselves and by ourselves, we do not have faith.

The Word *Faith* Bearing Two Denotations

The word *faith* bears two denotations. The first denotation refers to the things the believers believe in; it is the objective faith (Eph. 4:13; 1 Tim. 1:19b; 2 Tim. 4:7). The second denotation refers to the believing action of the believers; this is the subjective faith (Gal. 2:20). Christ is the object of our faith. Here the faith is objective. Then we believe in the Lord. This believing is a subjective action, our acting faith in the Lord Jesus.

The Faith of the Believers Being Christ Entering into Them to Be Their Faith

The faith of the believers is actually not their own faith but Christ entering into them to be their faith (Rom. 3:22 and note 1; Gal. 2:16 and note 1). Now we need to consider how and when Christ entered into us to be our faith. When we repented unto God, the pneumatic Christ as the sanctifying Spirit of God (1 Pet. 1:2a) moved within us to be our faith by which we believed on the Lord Jesus (Acts 16:31). Romans 10:17 says, “So faith comes out of hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” As sinners we did not have faith. Faith came into us by our hearing the word. This word is just Christ Himself.

When we heard the gospel, the preacher described Christ to us. The more we heard, the more we saw Christ and were attracted to Christ. As an illustration of this, we can say that a male falls in love with a female by seeing her. The more he sees her, the more he loves her. Her being so charming produces his love for her. Actually, that is not his love but her attraction. The preachers preach Christ to present Christ’s beauty. After hearing such a word about Christ, that is, after seeing such a Christ, within you there is an appreciation of Christ, and your appreciation of Him is the reaction to His attraction. We can believe in the Lord Jesus because we hear about Him, that is, we see Him. We read

the Bible, and in the Bible we see something about Him.

If you have the opportunity, it would be very good to preach the gospel according to this crystallization of Romans. Tell people about Christ in His divinity and humanity, in His being the only begotten Son of God and the firstborn Son of God. Many logical and thoughtful people would be attracted to such a wonderful person in the universe. Try in your vital group to go out to touch people by presenting Christ in the way that you have heard in these messages. After seeing, that is, after knowing, such a Christ, who would not believe in Him? Faith comes from hearing, hearing equals seeing, and seeing equals knowing Christ. Faith comes from hearing, and hearing is from the word of Christ.

When the proper preaching of the gospel is going on, the Spirit, the pneumatic Christ, accompanies that preaching. That preaching speaks Christ outside of you, but the pneumatic Christ right away accompanies that preaching and works within you. Then you repent and appreciate such a One. Spontaneously something within you rises up. This is your faith, your believing. Your believing comes from your knowing of Christ. Your believing actually is your appreciation of Christ as a reaction to His attraction. Only the believers, not the sinners, have this kind of reaction.

If you see this point, you will say, "Lord Jesus, even my believing in You is You Yourself. You are so attractive and beautiful! Who can help but believe in You?" Many young people have been attracted by the Savior's beauty. Even if their parents persecute them and threaten them to death, they will not give up their faith in Christ. This kind of faith is Christ Himself. By such a faith the believing ones believe that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead that they may be saved (Rom. 10:9b-10a; 5:1). They have access through faith into the grace in which they now stand (Rom. 5:2).

The end of Romans 9 tells us that the lawkeepers are trying to build up their own righteousness by their work to keep the law. Paul said that this is wrong because they do not do this by faith in Christ (vv. 30-33). Then the beginning of chapter ten says, "For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to everyone who believes" (v. 4). Not many people have ever heard a gospel telling them that Christ is the end of everything. Christ terminated the law. He is the end of the law that He may become your righteousness. The first four chapters of Romans cover justification judicially. Then chapters five to eight are on Christ as life organically. Then chapter ten is on the faith of the believers practically. This faith can be ours by Christ being the end of the law that we may be justified. This means that He is the end of the law unto, resulting in, righteousness.

Eventually, All Three, the Righteousness of God, the Life of Christ, and the Faith of the Believers, Becoming the All-inclusive Christ

Eventually, all three, the righteousness of God, the life of Christ, and the faith of the believers, become the all-inclusive Christ. Hence, this all-inclusive Christ is not only the center but also the structure of the dynamic salvation of God.

The Importance of Faith

Without Faith It Being Impossible to Please God

Hebrews 11:6 says that without faith it is impossible to please God. This is a very strong word in the whole universe. To please God is to make God happy. Without faith it is impossible for you and me to make God happy. God could not and would not be happy with anyone without faith. This shows us the importance of faith.

According to the New Testament, we are the believers. The name *Christian* is used in the New Testament only three times (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). But we are referred to repeatedly as believers in the New Testament. Galatians 6:10 says that we are the household of the faith, that is, the household of believers. The name *Christian* in its original usage was actually a nickname, not a proper name. Acts 11:26 says, "The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." The disciples were given such a nickname, a term of reproach, in Antioch. So in this sense, the name *Christian* is not a

good name. If I come here to speak to you by addressing you as Christians, I would be like a Gentile professor giving you a lecture. But if I address you as believers, this makes a difference. *Believers* is a sweet title.

First Peter 4:16 uses the title *Christian*, saying, “But if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name.” Note 16¹ in the Recovery Version says:

Gk. *Christianos*, a word formed from Latin. The ending *ianos*, denoting an adherent of someone, was applied to slaves belonging to the great families in the Roman Empire. One who worshipped the emperor, the Caesar, or *Kaisar*, was called *Kaisarianos*, which means *an adherent of Kaisar, a person who belongs to Kaisar*. When people believed in Christ and became His followers, some in the Empire came to consider Christ a rival of their *Kaisar*. Then, at Antioch (Acts 11:26) they began to call the followers of Christ *Christianoi* (Christians), adherents of Christ, as a nickname, a term of reproach. Hence, this verse says, “As a Christian, let him not be ashamed”; that is, if any believer suffers at the hands of the persecutors who contemptuously call him a Christian, he should not feel ashamed but should glorify God in this name.

We should not prefer to call ourselves Christians. Instead, we are bonafide believers of Christ. The name *Christian* is not related to faith. But the title *the believers* is related to faith. Without this faith, we can never please God. The only thing that can make our God happy every day is to believe in Him, to have 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 said 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 said that he who comes forward to God must believe that God is. The 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” (10:11). “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 Christ lives in me. Christ lives. Christ is. Christ exists. I do not exist. This is the very essence of the short word *believe that God 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 more 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 more 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 (Acts 13:9 and note 1). 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 more 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 more 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 that 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. (*Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 69-78)