

Reading Schedule

Of

Hebrews

**Life-Study Messages
(Two messages/Week)**

Five Books Total

Book IV

Week	Life-Study Messages	Days Covered	Page #
19	37, 38	8/13 – 8/17	1 - 10
20	39, 40,	8/20 – 8/24	11 - 22
21	41, 42	8/27 – 8/31	23 - 32
22	43, 44	9/3 – 9/7	33 - 42
23	45, 46	9/10 – 9/14	43 - 54
24	47, 48	9/17 – 9/21	55 - 65
25	49, 50	9/24 – 9/28	66 - 75
26	51, 52	10/1 – 10/5	76 - 85

The Church in Pleasanton

2018

Heb. 8:10 For this is the covenant which I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will impart My laws into their mind, and on their hearts I will inscribe them; and I will be God to them, and they will be a people to Me.

1 Pet. 1: 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

MESSAGE THIRTY-SEVEN

THE LAW OF LIFE

In this message we come to a very crucial matter in Hebrews 8—the law of life. The crucial matter in Hebrews 7 was the indestructible life, and the crucial matter here in Hebrews 8 is the law of life. The focus of Hebrews 8 is the law of life. Although the words, “the law of life,” are not found in this chapter, what is revealed in this chapter essentially is the law of life. How do we know that the law mentioned in Hebrews 8 is the law of life? Because we are told in verse 10 that God will impart His laws into our mind and inscribe them on our hearts. Anything that can be imparted into our inward being must be life. Anything that is not life could never be wrought into our inward being. Therefore, according to the context of Hebrews 8, what is indicated by the word law must be the law of life. Please keep in mind that the law of life is the focus, the heart, of this whole chapter.

In this chapter we also have another five wonderful things: the heavenly Minister, the heavenly tabernacle, the more excellent ministry, the better covenant, and the better promises. The better promises produce the better covenant, and within the better covenant is the heavenly Minister who has a more excellent ministry in the heavenly tabernacle. Hence, we have five things—promises, covenant, Minister, ministry, and tabernacle.

In the Old Testament, the tabernacle, the priesthood, and the old covenant, that is, the law, were combined to fulfill God’s economy in the way of shadows. These three things give us a clear picture of the heavenly Minister with a more excellent ministry in the heavenly tabernacle and of the better covenant consummated upon better promises for the fulfillment of God’s economy, not in the way of shadows but in the way of reality. The heavenly tabernacle, the heavenly Minister, and the new covenant are combined for the fulfillment of God’s economy in the way of reality. This is the matter on which we are dwelling in this message. The heavenly tabernacle, as we have seen, is joined to our spirit. Since the heavenly tabernacle is joined to our spirit, the heavenly Minister of the better covenant is also joined to our spirit. Right now the heavenly Minister is doing His duty of ministering under the better covenant. This is the central thought here: the heavenly Minister doing His ministry in the heavenly tabernacle under the new covenant. This new covenant, which is called the better covenant, has been consummated upon the better promises, the promises found in Jeremiah 31.

The contents of the better covenant include four items: the imparting of the law of life into our being; having God as our God and being His people; the inward ability to know the Lord; and the propitiation for unrighteousnesses and the forgiveness of sins. All of these four items are focused on the law of life. In this message we need to see what the law of life is.

Before we can see what the law of life is, we must consider some other things that are the necessary background for our seeing this. Throughout the years we have repeatedly mentioned one central point: that God’s eternal purpose is to dispense Himself into us in order to make us His living expression. God has done this. Although certain negative things, such as Satan and sin, have come in, these have all become past history because of the all-inclusive crucifixion of Christ. The all-inclusive Christ has terminated all the negative things by His all-inclusive crucifixion. Thus, Satan and sin are a history. Very few Christians today realize that these things are histories. They think that these things are still entangling and bothering them. But that is a lie—these negative things are a history. When we all get into the New Jerusalem, we shall laugh at Satan and say, “Satan, now I know that you are just a history. As far as I am concerned, you

Week 19 – Day 1 (8/13) (Cont'd)

are nothing. I am in a new region, in the new realm of the new heaven and new earth. Satan, I am in the New Jerusalem, and you are a history.” What has made all of these things a history? The all-inclusive crucifixion of Christ.

Our new birth, our regeneration, is also a history. We were regenerated nineteen and a half centuries ago when Christ was raised from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3). According to your feeling, you were reborn some years ago, but according to God’s divine point of view, you were reborn nineteen and a half centuries ago. Since we were reborn when Christ was resurrected from the dead, our rebirth is a history. When we were regenerated, the inward ability to know God was imparted into us. This also occurred nineteen and a half centuries ago. All of these items have become accomplished facts that have been bequeathed to us as our bequests. If our eyes have been opened, we shall not need to pray but simply say, “Lord, thank You for Your bequests. Thank You for Your will. I just take it, receive it, and enjoy it.”

If we see that the New Testament is actually a testament, a will, we shall preach the gospel in the highest way. We would speak to people in this way, saying, “Friends, here is a testament, a will. It is Jesus Christ’s will. This will says that many bequests are yours. One bequest is that all of your sins have been taken away by Him. Before you even committed your sins, they were already forgiven by God and put away. Another bequest is that before you were born of your parents, nineteen and a half centuries ago you were reborn, and the divine life was imparted into you. It does not matter whether you understand this or not. All you need to do is receive the will and thank the Lord. Say, ‘Thank You, Lord, for the will and for all the bequests. Thank You, Lord, for the forgiveness of sins and for regeneration.’” The more the newly saved ones thank the Lord for His testament, for the forgiveness of sins, for their regeneration, and for all the other bequests, the more anointing they will have and the more riches of life they will possess. This is the highest preaching of the gospel. In order to preach the gospel in this way, we need to have a clear view of the testament and we need the power of the Spirit with the anointing. When we preach the gospel in such a high way, people will not reject it. They will be happy to receive it and say, “Praise the Lord! Thank You, Lord, for all these bequests.” If a poor sinner would do this, he would immediately become a millionaire. I expect that one day we shall see this kind of high preaching of the gospel.

I. THE ORIGIN OF THE LAW OF LIFE

Now we come to the law of life. The focus of the heavenly tabernacle, the heavenly Minister, the more excellent ministry, the better covenant, and the better promises is on the law of life. What is the origin of the law of life? The origin of the law of life is life. Then what is life? Life is just God Himself. When God is expressed, He is the Son (1:3a, 8a). When the Son, who is God Himself, is realized as the Spirit, He is life to us (2 Cor. 3:17a; 1 Cor. 15:45b). Life is God in Christ as the Spirit coming into our being. Thus, the Spirit is called the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2), which is the eternal and divine life. Out of this life, the law of life comes through the regeneration of the Spirit of life (John 3:5-6). When we were regenerated by the Spirit of life, the eternal and divine life was imparted into us, out of which the law of life comes to exist in our inward being.

Rom. 8:3 For that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh,

Heb. 7:19 (For the law perfected nothing), and, on the other hand, the bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

II. THE DEFINITION OF THE LAW OF LIFE

What is the law of life? A law is a natural regulation, a constant and unchanging rule. A law of life is the natural characteristic, the innate, automatic function of a certain kind of life, and the higher a life is, the higher is its law. The law of the divine life is then the natural characteristic, the innate, automatic function of the life of God, and since the life of God is the highest, its law is the highest. This highest law of life is the function, the working, of the divine life. This function and working are innate, spontaneous, natural, and automatic.

With any kind of life, whether it be vegetable, animal, human, or divine, there is a function. Anything that does not have a function must not be life. Consider the example of a peach tree: its function is to blossom and to bring forth peaches. Likewise, a dog has the function of barking, and a cat has the function of catching mice. Every life has an automatic and innate function, and this innate function is the law of that life. As long as a peach tree is functioning, it will bring forth peaches; it will never bring forth anything else. Bringing forth peaches is the law of the peach tree. There is no need for a farmer to teach a peach tree, saying, “Little peach tree, you must know my desire is that you produce peaches. I don’t want anything else.” If that peach tree could talk, it would say, “Sir, go home and rest. You don’t need to teach me. Don’t you know that in my peach-tree life there is the peach-bearing law? There is a law in my peach-tree life that keeps me from bringing forth any other kind of fruit. It causes me to bring forth peaches, just the fruit that you desire.” In like manner, a cat catches mice because in its life is the mouse-catching law, and a dog barks because in its life is the barking law. What is the law of life? It is the innate, automatic function of the divine life. The divine life is living, active, and aggressive. This life is always acting, and whenever it acts it functions according to the automatic law of life.

God’s intention is to dispense Himself into us as our life. He has done this and right now He is in us as our life. This life, the life on the highest plane, is the most active life. When this life functions, it regulates. In a good and positive sense, His working is His regulating, for the working of the divine life within us is its regulating. This is the law of life.

III. THE LOCATION OF THE LAW OF LIFE

According to verse 10 of this chapter, the law of life has been imparted into our inward being. Jeremiah 31:33, from which this verse is quoted, says that the law of life is put into our inward parts and written in our hearts. Hebrews 8:10 says that the law of life is put into our mind, proving that the mind is one of our inward parts. Our inward parts include not only the mind but also the emotions and the will, which, along with the conscience, are the composition of our heart mentioned in the following clause in this verse. Hence, the law of life is located in our inward parts, the parts of our heart—conscience, mind, will, and emotion—that is, in our heart, the composition and the totality of our inward parts.

The life of God has been imparted into our spirit. Based upon this fact, the law of this life must firstly be in our spirit as one law. Then from our spirit it spreads into the inward parts of our heart and becomes many laws. It is one law in being in our spirit and it becomes many laws in function in the many parts of our heart. This is why in Jeremiah 31:33 it is “law” and in verse 10 here it becomes “laws.”

IV. THE FUNCTION OF THE LAW OF LIFE

The function of the law of life is to take away, to kill, the old element of Adam and to add in, to supply, the new element of Christ. While the law of the divine life works and regulates in our inward parts, it kills and takes away the old things of our natural being. It does have the power to reduce all the negative things

Week 19 – Day 2 (8/14) (Cont'd)

in our natural man. At the same time, it adds in and supplies the divine element of the new creation, bringing the riches of Christ into our being. While it reduces the old element of Adam from us, it adds in the new element of Christ to us. While it takes away the old, it replaces it with the new. It performs a kind of metabolism in the Christian life and accomplishes the transformation of life for us.

V. THE POWER OF THE LAW OF LIFE

The law of letters is of impossibility, perfecting nothing (Rom. 8:3, Heb. 7:19), but the law of life is of “the power of an indestructible life,” perfecting everything for us in fulfilling God’s purpose (Heb. 7:16). In the old covenant, the law of letters was weak and could not possibly perfect anything. It was merely a type of the law of life. Like a lifeless photograph of a lively person, it had the form but not the life. It showed people something, but it could do nothing for them. But in the new covenant, the law of life is powerful; it is of the power of an indestructible life that is able to perfect everything for us in God’s economy. It is no longer merely a form; it has the divine life as its essence for reality. It not only shows us the things but also accomplishes them for us. Whatever it requires it can fulfill.

VI. THE ISSUE OF THE LAW OF LIFE

As the function of the law of life accomplishes metabolically the transformation of life for us, so the issue of the law of life is that we are transformed and conformed to the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29) and that Christ is formed in us. The transformation in life and the conformation to Christ depend upon the function of the law of life and are the issue of the work of the law of life. Christ can only be formed in us by the regulating of the law of life. The regulating of the law of the divine life brings the riches of Christ into our life and forms Christ in our being.

VII. GOD’S DESIRE IN THE LAW OF LIFE

God is not only our God but also our Father. Hence, He desires to be our God in the law of life. We are not only God’s creatures but also His children. Hence, He desires us to be His people in the law of life. God does not desire only to be our God according to the outward law of letter; He desires to be our Father according to the inward law of life. Nothing of the keeping of the outward law of letter can satisfy God’s desire. He can only be pleased by our living according to the inward law of life. And He does not desire to have us only as His creatures without His life but also as His children with His life. Hence, He wants us to be His people in the law of life, living not according to the outward law of letter but according to the inward law of life. Both His relationship to us and ours to Him should be a relationship maintained in the law of life. With the law of letter there was nothing but death. With the law of life there is no death but life. Only life can satisfy the divine desire.

Rom. 8:33-34 Who shall bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died and, rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

We have seen that the divine priesthood is the presence of life and the absence of death and that it saves us from all of the by-products of death and brings us into glory. The divine priesthood saves us to the uttermost, meaning that it brings us into complete perfection, into glorification. But this saving, this working, is not objective; it is absolutely subjective. Yes, Christ is the divine High Priest on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high. But we must remember that when He was resurrected from the dead nineteen and a half centuries ago, being born as the Firstborn Son of God, He imparted His life into all of God's chosen and marked-out people. Although at that time we had not yet decided to believe in the Lord, we had already been marked out by God in eternity past before the foundation of the world. If you do not believe this word now, you will believe it when you come into the New Jerusalem. God marked us out, and Christ imparted His life into us. God and Christ can never be wrong; they can never make a mistake. To say that God made a mistake in selecting us is an insult to God. How could God make a mistake? Although we are unworthy and do not deserve anything, God selected us and premarked us, and Christ, the Firstborn Son, imparted Himself into us as life. We must have this vision to see God's economy so clearly. Forget about your feelings, understanding, and realization and come back to the pure Word and receive the clear vision. Whatever God does is eternal and has no element of time or space. God's choosing of us was eternal; there is no time element involved here. None of us is here by accident. It was prearranged by our Father. He made that decision before the earth was made.

After Christ imparted Himself into us, He went to sit on the throne in the heavens. In some of our past ministry we said that after Christ went into the heavens, He came down into us. Although this is right in a sense, it is only right according to our point of view. Looking at this matter from a higher point of view, we can see that Christ did not first ascend into the heavens and then come down to get into us but that before He ascended to the heavens, at the time of His resurrection, He imparted Himself into us as life already. Once He entered into the heavens, He had nothing left to do because He had already accomplished everything. Everything was finished. He had made purification of sins and had imparted Himself into all of God's marked-out people.

What is Christ doing as He sits in the heavens? He is interceding. Perhaps Christ would say of a certain premarked one, "Father, look at that one. He has been marked out by You and I have imparted My life into him, but he is still wandering. Father, bring him home." Soon afterward, some Christian friends invite him to a meeting of the church and he is captured. After that, the interceding Christ on the throne might say, "It is good that this dear one has come home, but, Father, You must do something further in him. The life in him has not been developed. It needs to develop, function, and work." Then in the next meeting this dear one stands up and says, "Lord Jesus, I love You. I consecrate myself to You." The life functions because of Christ's invisible intercession. As Romans 8:34 makes clear, after ascending to the heavens, Christ is there interceding for us. Such a perfected, qualified, equipped, and Almighty One is interceding for us. After a few days, the interceding Christ may say of this dear one, "Father, he is functioning now, but he is not mature. He is still so young." Suddenly in a meeting this brother stands up and prays, "Lord, You know that I am still so young. I am not yet mature. Lord, I want to mature." His prayer corresponds to the heavenly intercession. It seems that the prayer originated with him, but actually it was a quotation of the heavenly intercession. Many times our utterances in prayer or praise are quotations of the heavenly intercession. Such utterances are not originated or initiated by us but by Christ's intercession. Perhaps this same brother is touched one morning concerning his selfishness, having the deep conviction that he is full of self. He may think that this is the reaction to a certain message, not realizing that this also is a reaction to the heavenly intercession. Whatever happens to us in our spiritual life is either a quotation of the heavenly intercession or a reaction to it.

Week 19 – Day 3 (8/15) (Cont'd)

Christ is in heaven interceding for us all. The purpose of His intercession is that the divine life within us, which is just Himself, may develop in our whole being and that its law of life may spread into our inward parts and become many laws regulating us in every aspect. One of these laws must get into our mind to regulate it and to renew it completely. You may think that the renewing of the mind is due to the teachings and messages that you hear in the church life. Actually this is not so; the renewing of the mind does not come from without but from one of the many laws of the divine life within you. When your mind is renewed by the law of life, it will be revolutionized, and you will never think the way you did before. All of your considerations will be fully renewed by the regulating law of the working life within you. This simply means that the divine life has grown from your spirit into your mind.

Another of these many laws will get into our emotion and saturate it. Whether our emotion is cold or hot, one of the laws will penetrate our emotion and regulate it with the nature of Christ's emotion, bringing the element of the emotion of Christ into our emotion. In a sense, our emotion will be remade, having been saturated with the element of Christ's emotion. We shall never love or hate as we did before. Everything that we do out of our emotion will be absolutely revolutionized. In particular, our love will be regulated, permeated, transformed, and remade. This is the growth of the life of Christ into our emotion.

In the same principle, one of these working laws will permeate our will. Whether our will is naturally stubborn or submissive makes no difference, for neither is useful for the life of Christ. In the past I have seen some very stubborn wills and some submissive wills. While most of the elders in the churches love the submissive wills, I am just as bothered by the submissive wills as by the stubborn wills. According to our human feeling, we all love a submissive will, but as long as a submissive will is a natural will, it is not adequate. It does not matter whether our will is stubborn, submissive, or neutral. As long as it is our will, it is useless for the life of Christ. The working of the law of the divine life must permeate our will. Although I have heard many people say, "I hate my stubborn will," I have never heard anyone say, "I hate my submissive will." We all must learn to say, "I hate my stubborn will, my submissive will, and my neutral will. I just hate my will. I don't care whether my will is stubborn, submissive, or neutral. As long as it is my will, I hate it because it is natural." As the law of the divine life works in us, one of its functions will saturate our will with the will of Christ, making His will ours. In this way our will is remade with the very element of Christ's will. This means that Christ's life will grow into our will. Eventually, in our mind, emotion, and will there will be the growth of the life of Christ.

This permeation, this saturation, is what it means to be saved into perfection. Christ's saving us to the uttermost does not mean that we are on earth, having nothing of Him, and that He is far away in the heavens unrelated to us, interceding for us until we pray and He answers our prayer by stretching out His hand to save us. That is a religious concept. We need to see that on the cross Christ put away our sins, that in His resurrection He imparted Himself as life into all of us, and that now He is sitting on the throne of God in the heavens interceding for us. On the one hand, He is in our spirit as our life growing; on the other hand, He is on the throne in the heavens interceding for the growth and development of the seed that He has sown within us. This is the subjectively objective Christ for our experience. It is in this way that His divine life functions within us. Every bit of the function of His life is a regulation of its law. Some of these life functions will spread into our mind and others will permeate our emotion and will. This is the work of the law of life.

Heb. 1:3 Who, being the effulgence of His glory and the impress of His substance and upholding and bearing all things by the word of His power, having made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Col. 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,

MESSAGE THIRTY-EIGHT

THE WORKING OF THE LAW OF LIFE

**I. THE STANDARD MODEL—
THE FIRSTBORN SON OF GOD**

God's eternal purpose is to work Himself into us and make us the same as His Firstborn Son. The Firstborn Son of God is the standard model for God's economy. This standard model has both divinity and humanity. Originally, He was the Only Begotten Son of God. As the Only Begotten Son of God, He was the embodiment of God, for all that is in the Godhead was embodied in Him (Col. 2:9). He was also the expression of God (Heb. 1:3). As the embodiment and expression of God, He became incarnated, bringing divinity into humanity and joining humanity to divinity. But before the incarnation, divinity had never been joined to humanity. Since the day of His incarnation, there was in this universe a wonderful Person who was both human and divine.

The Lord Jesus lived on earth for thirty three and a half years. On some occasions He exercised His divinity, but most of the time He lived out His humanity. People mostly saw Him as a man, as a proper, perfect, and extraordinary man. His extraordinary quality was His divinity. One day, He went to the cross to put away sin. At the same time, He destroyed Satan, the source of sin. As the Lord destroyed sin and Satan, He tasted death (Heb. 2:9), and by tasting death He swallowed it. Through the Lord's all-inclusive death, every negative thing in the whole universe, including sin, Satan, and death, was terminated and made a history. After His crucifixion, the Lord rested for three days. According to the Bible, while He was resting in the grave, He took a tour of Hades, offering it the opportunity to do everything to Him and proving that it could do nothing with Him. After His rest and His tour, He walked out of Hades and arose from the tomb, coming forth in His resurrection. By His resurrection, He was born with His humanity into the divine sonship and became the Firstborn Son of God. The most striking thing about Christ as the Firstborn Son of God is that with Him all the negative things, including sin, Satan, and death, have become a history. He is a person who has divinity mingled with an uplifted humanity and who has humanity that is one with divinity. Ultimately, He entered into glory, even into glorification. Being in glorification is superior to being in glory, because being in glory does not require a process, whereas being in glorification does. The Lord Jesus, as the Firstborn Son of God, has passed through a process to enter into glory. That was His glorification.

As the Only Begotten Son, Christ was already in glory. That did not require glorification. However, once He was on earth in His humanity, He needed to be glorified. Therefore, as John 17:1 reveals, during the last night of His life on earth, He prayed, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You" (Recovery Version). Since He was already in glory, why did He still need to be glorified? Although He was in glory as the Only Begotten Son, since He had put on humanity, the human part of His being had to be glorified, to be processed into glory. In His resurrection Christ entered into His glorification (Luke 24:26).

Week 19 – Day 4 (8/16) (Cont'd)

Few Christians realize that ultimately in the New Testament the word perfection means glorification. Regardless how perfect you may be, if you have not been glorified, you are still not adequate. The book of Romans reveals that in the economy of God we have firstly justification, then sanctification, and finally glorification. Romans does not mention perfection. Both glorification and perfection, however, are found in Hebrews. Hebrews 2:9-10, which says that Christ, the Captain of our salvation, has been crowned with glory, refers to both perfection and glorification. His perfection was His glorification, the very glorification revealed in Romans 8. According to Romans 8, the last step of God's salvation is to glorify us, and according to Hebrew 2, it is through the Captain of our salvation that we are being brought into glory.

On the throne, as well as in our spirit, there is a glorified Man, a Man who has been fully perfected. Some saints, such as John Wesley and those with him, practiced what is called sinless perfection. According to the concept of sinless perfection, if you do not lie or lose your temper but love others and are humble, you have attained perfection. But this is a very low concept of perfection. I would ask you to compare this with the perfection of the glorified Jesus. The perfection of the glorified Jesus is that of divinity mingled with a humanity that has been tested, resurrected, uplifted, and glorified.

At this point I want to introduce a new word—sonized. After passing through all the tests and after being resurrected and uplifted, the humanity of Jesus was “sonized.” This means that it was brought into the divine sonship. Although Christ was the Son of God, before His resurrection He was clothed with humanity, which was unrelated to that sonship. One day, He brought this humanity into, through, and out of death, and it was resurrected by the power of the divine life according to the Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:4). Through this process, His humanity was sonized into God's divine sonship. Thus, with His resurrected and uplifted humanity He was born in resurrection as the Firstborn Son of God. This is the meaning of Acts 13:33: “God...hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.”

Such a sonized One is now the standard model. This standard model has attained perfection—a perfection with divinity, with an uplifted humanity, and with all negative things having become a history. We need to lift up our eyes and gaze at this standard model. As we look at Him, we behold His divinity and His sonized humanity. All the negative things are now on the other side of the river and have become a history. But the standard model is in glorification and exaltation on the golden side of the river, where there is no sin, death, Satan, or any other negative thing. Now there is a Man in the glory, a Man in perfection. What kind of perfection can compare with this? The so-called sinless perfection is in the basement, while this glorious perfection is in the Holy of Holies.

What is perfection? Perfection is glorification. In this perfection is the Man who has divinity, who has a humanity that has been sonized as the Firstborn Son of God, and who is now in His glorification. With Him, all the negative things are a history, having been left on the other side of the river. This is perfection and this is glorification. In the New Testament, glorification is the equivalent of perfection. Christ, the standard model, is now in such a perfection, and we are on the way.

- Heb. 7:25 Hence also He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, since He lives always to intercede for them.
- Rom. 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.
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II. THE PRODUCTION OF THE MANY SONS OF GOD

When this standard model was resurrected, being born in His humanity to be the Firstborn Son of God, He included us (1 Pet. 1:3). When He was sonized in His humanity, in His resurrection, we were born as sons of God. We need to forget time. There is no clock in heaven, and there will be no watches in eternity. Although we may not be able to understand this, we should simply accept it. According to the pure word of the Holy Bible, when Christ was resurrected, He imparted Himself into us as life, and we were reborn. After imparting Himself into us as life, Christ entered into perfection, into glory, where He is now interceding for our glorification.

Christ is interceding for us to be saved to the uttermost. Although I have heard many messages saying that Christ is interceding for us, I have not heard one message which said that Christ is interceding for us to be brought into perfection. Many pastors use Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:25 concerning Christ's interceding to comfort those who are in difficulty. But Christ is not interceding merely for us to have comfort. Such a concept of His intercession is too low. Christ is interceding for us to be glorified and to be saved into His perfection.

What does it mean to be brought into Christ's perfection? It is to eliminate all the by-products of death, to swallow up all vanity, corruption, groaning, and decay. Christ is interceding that this work may be accomplished. His intercession on the throne motivates the life seed that He sowed into us at the time of His resurrection.

Suppose you have overcome every sin. You are peaceful, comfortable, and have no trouble with anyone or anything. If you would have attained such a height, do you suppose that you would be happy, content, and satisfied? I certainly would not be. What is the good of only overcoming sin and having no difficulties? If we only have this, we are, at most, just like a piece of blank white paper. Is this the meaning and goal of our life? This kind of perfection is meaningless. The perfection revealed in the New Testament, however, is to have our whole being processed into Christ's glorification, to have our entire being permeated and saturated with His uplifted and glorified being. Overcoming sin, having patience, loving others—all this is in a different category of perfection from that revealed in the New Testament. Christ is interceding that the life which He has sown into our spirit may be motivated to grow, develop, and saturate all our inward parts, until we are completely permeated with His glorified and uplifted being. When this is completed, that will be the day of the redemption of our body, of the manifestation of the sons of God, and of the freedom of glory for the whole universe. In that day there will be no more groaning, vanity, bondage or corruption. This is glorification.

III. THE WORKING OF THE LAW OF LIFE

Now we come again to the law of life. The law of life is working Christ, the standard model, into every part of our being, saturating our inward parts with all that He is. This is what the New Testament calls transformation. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, that you may prove by testing what the will of God is, that which is good and well-pleasing and perfect" (Recovery Version). How can our mind be renewed? Only by the working of the law of life which saturates us with what the standard model is and makes us a reproduction, a reprint, of Him. Furthermore, 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, "But we all, with unveiled face beholding and reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit" (Gk.). This is the issue of the working of the law of life within us. Eventually, as Romans 8:29 says, the working of the law of life will conform us to the image of God's Firstborn Son. All the brothers of the Firstborn will be conformed to Him. The Firstborn Son of God, the standard model, is today in perfection and in glorification, but we are not yet there. We are on the way and under the process. As the

Week 19 – Day 5 (8/17) (Cont'd)

Firstborn Son intercedes for us, His interceding will motivate our inner life seed to develop, grow, and permeate our being so that we may be transformed and conformed to His image and ultimately be brought into His perfection and glorification. This comes from the working of the law of life.

IV. THE INNER SENSE OF LIFE

While the law of life is working within us, we have a deeper consciousness of life. His intercession very effectively motivates our inner seed. How do we know that our inner seed has been motivated? By our inner sense, our inner consciousness. Although you may feel too tired to attend a particular church meeting, the seed within will not let you sleep. By the inward “pum, pum, pum,” the energizing of the heavenly intercession, you realize that you must go to that meeting. Sometimes, when we are attracted to the worldly things, the inward “pum, pum, pum” gives us no rest, and we find ourselves doing what the Lord desires. What a mercy this is! I have the full assurance that in the coming years the heavenly “pum, pum, pum” will accomplish a great deal in the Lord’s recovery. We will never be satisfied with what we have seen in the past. This ministry will be higher and richer. The Lord will use the churches and the messages to gather together His true seekers to be His testimony to the whole earth. Everything in the Bible concerning the church will be fulfilled before the Lord comes back. Deep within, we all have the sense that nothing but this standard model can satisfy us. We cannot be happy unless we are saturated with Him. This is a strong proof that He is interceding for us to be glorified, to be brought into His perfection.

V. THE CORPORATE REPRODUCTION OF THE STANDARD MODEL

God’s eternal purpose is to have a group of sons as His corporate expression. Firstly, His Only Begotten Son passed through the process and entered into glory, having been fully perfected to be the standard model, the Firstborn Son of God, for God’s expression. Since the time of Christ’s ascension, God has been working to have a mass reproduction of that standard model, His Firstborn Son. During the centuries, few Christians have seen this, and as a result, the Lord has been delayed. Although there are millions of Christians on earth today, there are not many reproductions of the standard model. In His recovery, the Lord is reproducing the standard model, working desperately among us to make every one of us the same as the Firstborn Son. This is what it means to be perfected. For perfection, we need divinity, an uplifted, resurrected humanity, and the terminating crucifixion. Our perfection must include the terminating crucifixion of Christ, for His all-inclusive death puts all the negative things on the other side of the river as a history. We also need to have every inward part of our being permeated with all that He is. Even the smallest part of our being must be saturated with Him. All these are the elements of our perfection. When all this has been wrought into us, we shall have a thorough transformation and be completely conformed to His image. This is glorification, perfection, and the reproduction, the reprint, of the model Son.

The crucial point in all this is the law of life, the working of the divine life within us. The law of life, which is the innate, automatic working of the divine life, is doing a perfecting work within us, gradually infusing us with divinity, eliminating all the negative things, and imparting all that Christ is into our being. In other words, by the law of life the Lord is renewing us, transforming us, and conforming us to His image. When this process has been completed, He will come to redeem our body, transfiguring our vile body into a glorious one (Phil. 3:21). We are now under the process of the working of the law of the divine life.

The law of life is now working to renew us from within. Ephesians 4:22-24 tells us to be renewed in the spirit of our mind that we may put off the old man and put on the new man. According to Ephesians 2:15, the new man is the church. To put on the new man is to put on the church. The new man is the practical church life, the corporate reproduction of the standard model. We are now in the process of being renewed in the spirit of our mind, and gradually we are putting on the new man. This renewing of the mind and putting on of the new man, the church, is the issue of the working of the law of life.

Study Questions

1. Describe the Sabbath rest in the various ages.
2. Give three reasons why the church today is the Sabbath rest.

Heb. 9:1-3 Now then the first covenant also had ordinances of service, and its sanctuary was of this world.
2 For a tabernacle was prepared, the first, in which were the lampstand and the table and the loaves that were set forth, which is called the Holy Place; 3 And after the second veil, a tabernacle, which is called the Holy of Holies,

MESSAGE THIRTY-NINE

THE TYPE OF THE OLD COVENANT AND THE REALITY OF THE NEW COVENANT

In this message we come to Hebrews 9:1-15, a passage of Scripture which is very difficult to understand. In 9:1-3 we see that there were two tabernacles. Hebrews 9:1 says, “Then indeed the first covenant has ordinances of service, and its sanctuary, a sanctuary of this world.” The sanctuary here is the entire tabernacle (Exo. 25:8-9), including the first tabernacle which is called the Holy Place (v. 2) and the second tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies (v. 3). Verse 2 says, “For a tabernacle was prepared, the first, in which were both the lampstand and the table and the loaves set forth, which is called the Holy Place.” When I read this verse in the past, I was bothered. According to the knowledge that I had of Exodus, there was only one tabernacle. If there was only one tabernacle, how then could this verse speak of “the first”? By the term “Holy Place” in this verse we can understand that the first tabernacle was that part of the unique tabernacle which was called the Holy Place. Verse 3 says, “And after the second veil, a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies.” The Holy of Holies was the second tabernacle. Hence, we have the first tabernacle, the Holy Place, and the second tabernacle, the Holy of Holies.

These two tabernacles are symbols of two covenants. The Holy Place is a symbol of the old covenant and the Holy of Holies a symbol of the new covenant. Although it is difficult to realize the true significance of these covenants, it is easy to understand them if we consider the tabernacle. According to 9:2, in the Holy Place, the symbol of the old covenant, there were the lampstand and the table. These two things were good, but they were far off from God’s presence. Although a person could find nourishment at the table and enlightenment at the lampstand, he had no way to contact God. In the Holy Place there was neither God’s presence nor the way to come into His presence. Moreover, in the Holy Place there was no oracle, no place for the divine speaking of God. Where there is the oracle, there is God’s speaking. But in the Holy Place there was no divine speaking. Furthermore, there was no meeting with God in the Holy Place. The highest blessing is to meet with God. However, no one in the Holy Place could say that there he was meeting with God, for there was no way to meet Him in the Holy Place. Therefore, with respect to the Holy Place, there were four no’s: no presence of God, no way to contact God, no oracle for the speaking of God, and no meeting with God.

This is a true picture of today’s religion. When you were in the denominations, did you have either the presence of God or the way to come into His presence? Did you have the oracle where there was the divine speaking? Although there was a pulpit and the speaking of a theologian, there was no oracle with the divine speaking. Then how about meeting with God? Although the Holy Place is good and in it we may have nourishment and enlightenment, there is no presence of God, no way to come into His presence, no divine speaking, and no meeting with God. How pitiful!

We need to remember that the book of Hebrews was written to the Hebrew Christians who were staggering in the Holy Place. They were uncertain whether to come forward to the Holy of Holies or to shrink back from the Holy Place to the outer court. This means that they were on the border between the old covenant and the new covenant. The writer of Hebrews was marvelous and full of patience; he did not write superficially but in a very deep way. His writing was so deep that during the past nineteen centuries most of his readers have not fully realized what he said.

We have seen that the Holy of Holies signified the new covenant. What was in the Holy of Holies? Hebrews 9:4 speaks of the Holy of Holies as “having a golden altar.” The golden altar, which was the incense altar, was not in the Holy of Holies, but it belonged to the Holy of Holies. Notice that it does not say that the incense altar was in the Holy of Holies, but that the Holy of Holies had the incense altar. What is the function of the incense altar? It provides the way to come into God’s presence. The incense altar signifies the proper prayer with Christ in resurrection as the incense for our acceptance. Hence, it is the

Week 20 – Day 1 (8/20) (Cont'd)

entrance into God's presence. When I was in religion as a youth, I was taught to pray, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy name." Although we prayed a great deal in that way, we never entered into the Holy of Holies. Actually, the more we prayed in that way, the more we remained in the outer court, or even outside the outer court. That is not the experience of the incense altar. When we pray in the Lord's name with Him as the fragrant resurrection frankincense, we immediately enter into the Holy of Holies.

In 9:4 we see that in the Holy of Holies was also "the ark of the covenant covered round in every part with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant." Above the ark were "cherubim of glory overshadowing the propitiation-cover" (v. 5). Here in the Holy of Holies we not only have the entrance into God's presence but God's presence itself. Over the ark was the lid called the propitiation-cover, which was the place of the divine oracle of God's speaking. It is here that we have God's speaking. It is here that we meet with God and have fellowship and communion with Him. This is the new covenant symbolized by the Holy of Holies.

We all need to consider where we are. Are we Christians in a place where there is some amount of nourishment and enlightenment but no entrance into God's presence, no presence of God, no speaking of God, and no way to meet with God? Are we in that place or in the place where it is so easy to come into God's presence, have His speaking, and meet and have fellowship with Him? If you are in this place, then you are in the Holy of Holies.

The two tabernacles are not only symbols of two covenants but also types of two ages, two dispensations—the old testament dispensation and the new testament dispensation. If you are in the Holy Place, it means that you are in the old age, in the old dispensation. If you are in the Holy of Holies, then you are in the new age, in the new dispensation. At this point we need to read verses 8 and 9. "The Holy Spirit showing by this, that the way of the Holy of Holies has not yet been manifested while the first tabernacle still has its standing; which is a figure for the present time, according to which both gifts and sacrifices are offered, which, as to the conscience, are unable to perfect him who serves." The word "which" at the beginning of verse 9 refers to the tabernacle mentioned in verse 8. This tabernacle was a "figure for the present time," a type of an age, a dispensation. The "present time" means the new testament age, not the old testament age then present as indicated by the words "then present" in the King James translation. There are different translations of verse 9. Some render "the time then present" for "the present time," considering that this refers to the old testament age. But according to the Greek, the tabernacle is "a figure of the present time," which is the new testament age. By this one verse we are certain that the Holy Place was a type of an age. In this principle, the Holy of Holies must also be a symbol of an age.

The Holy Place was a symbol of the old covenant, which covered the entire old testament age. Eventually, the old covenant and the old testament age are one and the same. When a person was under the old covenant, he was in the old testament age. When he came into the new covenant, he came into the new testament age. The covenant and the age are one; they are inseparable. Without the age, there is no practical application of the covenant. The Holy Place, symbolizing the old covenant, symbolizes the old testament age. The Holy of Holies, symbolizing the new covenant, symbolizes the new testament age. Now the difficult point to understand is this: what is realized today in the new testament age was altogether a symbol in the old testament age. In the old testament age there were the shadows, but in the new testament age there are the realities. In the old testament age there was the covering of sins, which was a figure of the forgiveness of sins. In the old testament age there was the law of letters, which was a figure of the law of life in the new testament age. In the old testament age God was God to His people and His people were a people to Him according to the written law. That was a symbol that today in the new testament age God is God to us and we are a people to Him according to the law of life. Moreover, in the old testament age the priests taught the people to know God according to the law of letters. That was a shadow of the inward ability to know God in life according to the law of life. Therefore, everything in the new testament age was symbolized by the items in the old testament age. The Holy Place was a symbol of the old covenant and, at the same time, it was also a type of the new testament age. But the Bible does not say that the Holy of Holies was a type of the new testament age. In principle, the two tabernacles are both symbols of the two ages. In actuality, however, the Holy of Holies was not a type but a reality. Only the Holy Place was a type of the present age. Hence, this message is entitled, "The Type of the Old Covenant and the Reality of the New Covenant."

Heb. 8-10 The Holy Spirit thus making this clear, that the way of the Holy of Holies has not yet been manifested while the first tabernacle still has its standing, 9 Which is a figure for the present time. According to this tabernacle both gifts and sacrifices are offered, which are unable to perfect, according to conscience, him who worships, 10 Consisting only of foods and drinks and various washings, being ordinances of the flesh, imposed until the time of setting things right.

I. THE FIRST TABERNACLE—THE HOLY PLACE, SIGNIFYING THE OLD COVENANT AS A TYPE

As we have seen, the first tabernacle, the Holy Place, signified that the old covenant was a type (9:1-2, 6, 8-10). Since the Holy Place was a symbol of the old covenant, it signified that the old covenant was a type of the new. Hence, the entire Holy Place was a type, a figure, not the reality.

A. Of This World

The first tabernacle was of this world, of this creation (9:1). It was altogether material, not spiritual, and it was on earth, not in heaven. It was a temporary type, not the permanent reality.

B. With Ordinances of Flesh

The first tabernacle had ordinances of flesh (9:10). None of these ordinances was in the spirit or according to the spirit. Every one of them was related to the flesh. Because they were of letters outwardly, not of life inwardly, they could only give the worshippers a form, not the slightest amount of life.

C. Unable to Perfect the Worshippers

The first tabernacle as a type of the old covenant was unable to perfect the worshippers (9:9). Because it was not spiritual and had no life, it was unable to perfect those who served God through it. It exposed the shortcomings of God's worshippers, but it could not perfect them with real things of life in spirit.

D. A Parable, a Type of the New Covenant

The first tabernacle was a parable, a type, of the new covenant. It was not the reality but only a type, a figure, of the reality. Nevertheless, the Jews hold the type as the real thing. We must tell them of this. They are very thoughtful and need this kind of help. The Hebrew believers likewise were not clear concerning this at their time and also needed help in this matter.

E. The Way of the Holy of Holies, of the New Covenant, Not Yet Manifested until the Time of Reformation

Verse 8 says that at that time “the way of the Holy of Holies” had “not yet been manifested while the first tabernacle still has its standing.” At that time, the way of the Holy of Holies, that is, the way of the new covenant, had not yet been manifested. To say that the way into the Holy of Holies was not manifested while the first tabernacle still had its standing means that the way to enter into the new covenant had not yet been opened. When we come to 10:19-20, we shall see that a new and living way has been freshly cut. This is the way to enter into the Holy of Holies, into the new covenant. As we have seen, the first tabernacle, the Holy Place, signifies the old covenant, and the second tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, signifies the new covenant. Now the veil that closed the Holy of Holies has been riven by the death of Christ (Matt. 27:51) since it has crucified the flesh (Heb. 10:20; Gal. 5:24), and the way of the Holy of Holies has been manifested. Hence, we do not need to remain in the Holy Place, the old covenant, in the soul; we must enter the Holy of Holies, the new covenant, in the spirit. This is the goal of this book. The writer seemed to be saying to his readers, “Hebrew brothers, you should no longer remain in the old covenant. You now have a new way to come out of the old covenant and enter into the new covenant.” The writer's concept in the book of Hebrews is that the Holy of Holies and the new covenant are one; the Holy of Holies is the new covenant. When we come into the Holy of Holies, it means that we come into the new covenant, and when we come into the new covenant, we enter into the Holy of Holies.

Very few Christians have seen this or have found this key. Regardless of the number of times they have read this chapter, they do not understand what it is talking about. But we have found the key, which is that

Week 20 – Day 2 (8/21) (Cont'd)

the Holy of Holies is the new covenant and that the new covenant is the Holy of Holies. When we come into the Holy of Holies, we are in the new covenant. In the new covenant we have the imparting of the law of life. In the new covenant God is our God and we are His people according to the law of life. In the new covenant we have the inward ability to know God and the forgiveness of our sins. If we put all these together, we find that we are in God's presence, at His oracle, and are meeting with God and having fellowship with Him. This is the new covenant with the law of life.

II. THE SECOND TABERNACLE—THE HOLY OF HOLIES, SIGNIFYING THE NEW COVENANT AS A REALITY

The second tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, signifies that the new covenant is a reality, not a type (vv. 3-5, 7-8, 10-12). Even during the old testament age, the Holy of Holies was not a type. It was a reality because God's shekinah glory, presence, and speaking were there. It was there that God met with people. However, in the old testament age, not all the people could come into the Holy of Holies, because the way of entering into it had not been manifested yet. The Holy Place was a type. Were the lampstand and the table in the Holy Place real? No, they both were pictures. But what about the shekinah glory and God's speaking in the Holy of Holies? They were realities. Although the way into the Holy of Holies was not manifested in the old covenant age, it has been manifested today. Therefore, we should no longer remain in the Holy Place; we must come forward into the Holy of Holies. When we enter into the Holy of Holies, we are in the new covenant enjoying all the bequests of the new covenant, which has become a testament. These bequests include God's presence, God's speaking, and God's meeting and having fellowship with us. While we have fellowship with God, He infuses and transfuses Himself into us. This is the reality of the new covenant. Do you realize that today we are here in the Holy of Holies? Have you seen that we are now in the oracle enjoying God's presence? Hallelujah, we have crossed the river! We have left the Holy Place on the other side and we are now on the golden side in the Holy of Holies. This is the book of Hebrews.

A. The Greater and More Perfect Tabernacle—the Better Covenant

Verse 11 says that Christ has come a "High Priest of the good things that have come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle." The greater and more perfect tabernacle is the better covenant. The Holy of Holies and the new covenant, which is the better covenant, are one.

B. Not of This Creation, Not Made by Man's Hand

The second tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, is "not made by hand, that is, not of this creation" (v. 11). It is made by God and is heavenly and eternal.

C. A Reformation, the Reality of the Old Covenant, Setting Things Right

Verse 10 speaks of "the time of setting things right." This phrase may also be rendered as "reformation." In the old testament age nothing was set right; nearly everything was upset. The time of setting things right occurred when Christ came the first time to fulfill all the shadows of the old testament so that a new covenant might replace the old one. Christ has set everything in its right position. The reality of the old covenant has set things right. This means that there has been a right arrangement, a right ordering. Hence, it is a reformation. This is different from the "restitution" in Acts 3:21, which will occur at Christ's second coming.

1. Christ Having Come a High Priest of the Good Things That Have Come

The reformation depends upon Christ's first coming. He has "come a High Priest of the good things that have come" (v. 11). His first coming is mainly for Him to be the High Priest. It is through His priesthood, the kingly and divine priesthood which He is now exercising in "the greater and more perfect tabernacle" as a more excellent ministry, that all things are set right with life in the spirit. The "good things that have come" are the things ministered by the kingly and divine priesthood of Christ.

Heb. 10:4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

12:24 And to Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaks something better than that of Abel.

9:14 How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

2. Christ Having Entered Once for All into the Holy of Holies and Found an Eternal Redemption, Consummating the New Covenant

Verse 12 says, “nor through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, entered once for all into the Holy of Holies, having found an eternal redemption.” In the old covenant, the blood of goats and calves only made atonement for people’s sins (Lev. 16:15-18); it never accomplished redemption for their sins, “for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). In Hebrew, the root of the word for atonement means “cover.” Thus, “atonement” means to cover, not to take away sins. Since Christ as the Lamb of God took away the sin of the world (John 1:29) by offering Himself on the cross as the sacrifice for sins once for all (Heb. 9:14; 10:12), His blood, which He sprinkled in the heavenly tabernacle (12:24), has accomplished an eternal redemption for us, even the redemption of the transgressions under the first, the old, covenant (9:15), which transgressions were only covered by animal blood. Thus, we have been “redeemed with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

a. Christ Having Offered Himself to God through the Eternal Spirit

Verse 14 says, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself spotless to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” On the cross, Christ offered Himself to God in the human body (10:5, 10), which body is a matter of time. But He did it through the eternal Spirit, who is of eternity, without any limit of time. Hence, in the eyes of God, Christ as the Lamb of God was “slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). His offering of Himself was “once for all” (Heb. 7:27), and the redemption consummated through His death is eternal (9:12), having an eternal effect. The span of His redemption fully covers the span of sin.

b. His Blood Purifying Our Conscience from Dead Works to Serve the Living God

The blood of Christ purifies our conscience to serve the living God. To serve the living God requires a blood-purified conscience. To worship in dead religion or to serve any dead thing other than God does not require our conscience to be purified. The conscience is the leading part of our spirit. The living God whom we desire to serve always comes to our spirit (John 4:24) by touching our conscience. He is righteous, holy, and living. Our defiled conscience needs to be purified so that we may serve Him in a living way. To worship God in our mind religiously does not require this.

Verse 14 speaks of “dead works” and “the living God.” Since we were dead (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13), whatever we did, bad or good, was dead works before the living God. Hebrews is not a book which teaches religion, but a book which reveals the living God (3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22). To touch this living God we need to exercise our spirit (4:12) and have a blood-purified conscience. The blood of Christ was shed for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28). The new covenant was consummated with it (Heb. 10:29; Luke 22:20). It has accomplished eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:12; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19), and has purchased the church for God (Acts 20:28). It washes us from our sins (Rev. 1:5; 1 John 1:7), purifies our conscience (Heb. 9:14), sanctifies us (13:12), and speaks better things for us (12:24). By this blood we enter the Holy of Holies (10:19) and overcome Satan the accuser (Rev. 12:10-11). Therefore, it is precious and better than the blood of goats and bulls (9:12-13). We must highly value it and should not regard it common as animal blood. If we do, we shall suffer punishment by God (10:29-31).

3. Christ Being the Mediator of the New Covenant, the Executor of the New Testament

Verse 15 says, “And because of this He is Mediator of a new covenant, so that, death having taken place

Week 20 – Day 3 (8/22) (Cont'd)

for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, those who have been called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” Christ is the Mediator of the new covenant and the Executor of the new testament. By His death Christ has consummated the new covenant. In His death He has left this new covenant with us as a bequeathed testament, a designated will. Now in His resurrection, as the Mediator of the new covenant, He is the Executor of the new testament, executing what has been accomplished in the new covenant and bequeathed in the new testament.

a. To Enforce the New Covenant and Execute the New Testament

We have seen that all the promises of God have become accomplished facts in the new covenant through Christ’s redemptive work, and that all these accomplished facts have become bequests in the new testament. As the Mediator of the new covenant, Christ today in resurrection is enforcing the new covenant, and as the Executor of the new testament He is executing the new testament that all the bequests of the accomplished facts may become effective for us and that we may have the full enjoyment of them.

b. That the Called Saints Might Receive the Promise of the Eternal Inheritance

Today in His more excellent ministry with His kingly and divine priesthood, Christ as the Mediator is enforcing the new covenant, and as the Executor is executing the new testament so that the called saints might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (v. 15). What is the eternal inheritance? It is God Himself with all that He is, has, has done, and will do. All this is our eternal inheritance for our enjoyment. The way through which we inherit this is the new covenant. The promise of the eternal inheritance is based on Christ’s eternal redemption, not on our work. It is different from the promise in 10:36, which is conditioned on our endurance and doing the will of God. The eternal inheritance in the promise here is by the eternal redemption of Christ, whereas the great reward (10:35) in the promise in 10:36 is for our endurance and doing the will of God. Through His redemptive work, Christ has secured for us this promised eternal inheritance. Now with His resurrection life He is bringing us, the called and redeemed ones, into participation in all the riches of this eternal inheritance, according to the new testament in the new covenant way, that is, in the way of the Holy of Holies.

MESSAGE FORTY

THE EXPERIENCES OF CHRIST PORTRAYED BY THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE FURNITURE OF THE TABERNACLE

In this message we need to see the experiences of Christ as portrayed by the arrangement of the furniture of the tabernacle. Many Christians think that we can only experience Christ as our Savior and Protector. According to those who have had Pentecostal experiences, Christ is a Healer and a Worker of miracles. To them, experiencing Christ is a matter of witnessing miracles. But Christ is altogether mysterious, and our experiences of Him are also mysterious and very difficult to define. Thank God that this is clearly portrayed in His Holy Word by the arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle, His dwelling place. This arrangement is of three sections: the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. In each section there was furniture. Many Bible teachers agree that the entire tabernacle with its contents is a detailed picture of Christ. When I studied the typology of the tabernacle as a youth, I was told that it was a picture of Christ, but I was never taught that it was also a portrait of our experiences of Christ. Gradually in my experience throughout the years, I came to realize that the arrangement of the furniture of the tabernacle presents a full definition of our experiences of Christ. In this message we are not concerned with learning typology which was emphasized by the Brethren teachers more than a century ago. The recovery today is not a recovery of the teachings of typology but a recovery of the experiences of Christ as portrayed in the types. We need to enter into the experiences of Christ as shown in the arrangement of the furniture in God’s dwelling place.

Heb. 13:10 We have an altar from which they who are serving the tabernacle have no right to eat.

Titus 3: 5 Not out of works in righteousness which we did but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit,

John 6: 35 Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall by no means hunger, and he who believes into Me shall by no means ever thirst.

I. IN THE OUTER COURT—IN AN OUTWARD WAY

In the outer court are the brass altar and the brass laver. Both of these signify the experiences of Christ in an outward way.

A. At the Brass Altar

At the brass altar, which signifies the cross (Exo. 40:29), we participate in Christ mainly as our sin offering and also as all the other offerings (Heb. 13:10, 12; 10:12). In principle, the offerings solve our problems with God, fully reconciling us to Him and making our situation with God righteous and peaceful. Through the cross of Christ, we are right with God and with one another. Christ as our sin offering has solved the problem of sin, and as our peace offering He has also made peace between us and God and with one another. Thus, through the offerings offered by Christ on the cross, our condition is one of righteousness and peace. This is the first experience that we enjoy in Christ outwardly.

B. At the Brass Laver

After the altar is the laver, which signifies the washing of the Spirit. Both the altar and the laver were made of brass. In typology, brass signifies God's righteous judgment. The washing of the Spirit is based upon the judgment Christ has borne for us. At the brass laver (Exo. 40:30-32) we partake of the washing of the Spirit, which is based upon the redemption of Christ (Titus 3:5). Although we have experienced Christ as the offerings, before we can come into God's presence we also need to be washed, cleansed by the Spirit. This also is somewhat outward.

II. IN THE HOLY PLACE—IN AN INNER WAY

After having the two kinds of experiences in the outer court, we are qualified to come into the tabernacle. Firstly, we enter into the Holy Place, where our experiences of Christ turn from the outward to the inward. Here, in the Holy Place, we experience Christ in an inner way.

A. At the Showbread Table

When we enter into the Holy Place, the first item of furniture is the showbread table (Exo. 40:22-23), which signifies Christ as our life supply (John 6:35, 57). On the showbread table twelve loaves of bread were displayed. The number twelve signifies eternal completion and perfection. Christ is our eternal bread. Our inward enjoyment of Him at the showbread table is eternal.

B. At the Lampstand

After the showbread table is the lampstand (Exo. 40: 24-25), where we experience Christ as the shining light of life (John 1:4; 8:12). That the experience of the lampstand follows the experience of the showbread table indicates that the light comes out of our enjoyment of Christ as our life supply. When we enjoy Christ as our food, we have light because the "life is the light of men" (John 1:4). This light does not come from knowledge but from the life we enjoy.

While the showbread table has twelve loaves of bread, the lampstand has seven lamps. Seven is also a number of completion, but it is not the number of eternal completion. It is the number of completion in God's dispensational move, denoting a completion in God's movement. For eternity we shall have the life supply, but the purpose of the lampstand is to enable God's people to move and act in the dark age. It is for God's dispensational move. In His economy and dispensation, God has His movement and action, which

Week 20 – Day 4 (8/23) (Cont'd)

need the shining of the divine light. This shining is complete. Without the shining of the light we cannot move or do anything in God's economy. As we enjoy Christ as our life, this life becomes the light by which we move and act in God's economy. Our experience proves this. Firstly, we enjoy Christ as life and as the life supply. Then this life shines within us, and we know how to move and act. This is the experience of Christ as light inwardly.

C. At the Incense Altar

The last item of furniture in the Holy Place is the golden altar, which is the incense altar. The incense altar, lampstand, and showbread table form a triangle. The showbread table was on the north, the lampstand on the south, and the incense altar between them on the west, very close to the separating veil. At the incense altar we share in Christ as the sweet incense toward God for our acceptance by God (Eph. 1:6). God accepts us because of Christ, not because of what we are. This is why we must pray to God in the name of Christ. If we pray in, by, and with ourselves, our prayer will never be accepted. Christ as the acceptable, sweet incense must be added to our prayer. Our prayer is like a censer, and Christ is like the fragrant incense that is put into the censer. When we pray in and with Christ, Christ as incense is mingled with our prayer as it ascends to God. This incense becomes the element that makes our being and our prayer acceptable to God. This experience is more inward, leading to the most inward experiences in the Holy of Holies.

Although the incense altar is not in the Holy of Holies, it directs and leads us into the Holy of Holies. It is in the Holy Place, but its function is for the Holy of Holies. Hence, it is more inward than both the showbread table and the lampstand.

Regarding the standing place of the incense altar, there is apparently a discrepancy between the mentioning of it in the Old Testament and its mention in the New Testament. Exodus 30:6 says that the incense altar is put "before the veil," that is, outside the veil. This indicates clearly that the incense altar is put in the Holy Place, which is outside the veil, not in the Holy of Holies, which is within the veil. But Hebrews 9:4 says that the Holy of Holies has the incense altar. Therefore, most Christian teachers and Bible readers have thought that some error or misconstruction should somehow have occurred. When I was expounding the book of Hebrews to a group of believers in 1937, I also was troubled by this matter and thought that a mistake or misconstruction had taken place. I consulted a number of books, including one which says that verse 4 does not refer to the incense altar but to the incense censer. It says that in the early days the incense censer was always put outside the veil but that it gradually slipped into the Holy of Holies. This book has some ground for its interpretation because the Greek word for altar in verse 4 may also be translated as censer. But here it must refer to the incense altar, not to the censer, because according to the record of the Old Testament, there was no incense censer in the Holy Place or in the Holy of Holies. Recently, as I was writing the notes for the Recovery Version of Hebrews, the Lord gave me a clear and complete revelation regarding this matter. There is no error or misconstruction in verse 4. The apparent discrepancy has a very spiritual significance according to the following points:

The Old Testament record of the incense altar's standing place implies the closest relation of the incense altar to the ark of testimony, over which is the propitiation-cover, where God meets His people. According to the Hebrew, Exodus 30:6 says, "Thou shalt put it [the incense altar] before the veil that is over the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee." We must be very careful in reading this verse. The incense altar was put before the veil that is "over the ark of the testimony." The King James Version says "by the ark," but the proper translation must be "over the ark." The preposition used here makes a great difference. The preposition "by" means that the veil is separating the ark from the incense altar, whereas the preposition "over" means that the veil is not separating but simply covering the ark. The veil did not separate the incense altar from the ark; it covered the ark. Therefore, putting the incense altar before the veil was the same as putting it before the ark. Exodus 40:5 even says that the incense altar is set "before the ark of the testimony" without mentioning the separating veil that stands between them. Thus, the incense altar was before the ark. According to God's economy,

the covering veil was not to exist for eternity; it was to be removed. When the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, this veil was taken away. According to God's eternal economy, the veil should no longer be there. In a sense, it was there not as a separating veil but as a covering veil. It was not counted, because it was destined to be taken away. When the veil is removed, the incense altar is in front of the ark. When the book of Hebrews was written, the veil was gone. There was no veil in the eyes of God. Moreover, in Revelation 8:3 we see that the golden altar is before the throne of God. There is no separating veil. Thus, even in Exodus 40:3 and 21 the veil was, in the eyes of God, a covering veil, not a separating veil. It simply covered the ark temporarily, not eternally.

First Kings 6:22 (ASV) says that the incense "altar... belonged to the oracle." "Oracle" here means the "speaking place" of God, denoting the Holy of Holies, in which was the ark of testimony with the propitiation-cover, where God spoke to His people. Thus, the Old Testament indicated already that the incense altar belonged to the Holy of Holies. (Though it was in the Holy Place, its function was for the ark of testimony in the Holy of Holies. On the day of atonement, both the incense altar and the propitiation-cover of the ark of testimony were sprinkled with the same blood for atonement—Exo. 30:10; Lev. 16:15-16.) Hence, in Exodus 26:35, only the showbread table and the lampstand are mentioned as being in the Holy Place, not the incense altar.

The incense altar is related to prayer (Luke 1:10-11), and in Hebrews we are shown that to pray is to enter the Holy of Holies (10:19) and to come to the throne of grace, which is signified by the propitiation-cover over the ark of testimony in the Holy of Holies. Our prayer often begins with our mind, which is a part of our soul, signified by the Holy Place. But our prayer always ushers us into our spirit, signified by the Holy of Holies.

Due to all these points, the writer of this book had to reckon that the incense altar belongs to the Holy of Holies. Verse 4 does not say that a golden altar is in the Holy of Holies, as the lampstand and the table are in the Holy Place, but that the Holy of Holies has a golden altar, since it belongs to the Holy of Holies. This concept fits the whole emphasis of the book of Hebrews which is that we should press on from the soul (signified by the Holy Place) to the spirit (signified by the Holy of Holies).

The incense altar belongs to the oracle—the speaking place of God, that is, the Holy of Holies. The incense altar typifies Christ in His resurrection as the sweet and fragrant incense in which God extends His well-pleasing acceptance to us. We pray with such a Christ to contact God that God may be pleased to speak to us. We speak to God in our prayer with Christ as the sweet incense, and God speaks to us in the sweet savor of this incense. This is the dialogue in the sweet fellowship between us and God through Christ as the sweet incense.

Now we can understand this apparent discrepancy. As we have seen, there is actually no discrepancy at all. According to the Old Testament, the incense altar belongs to the Holy of Holies. Although it is in the Holy Place, it does not belong to the Holy Place but to the Holy of Holies. Thus, Hebrews says that the Holy of Holies has the incense altar, not that the incense altar is in the Holy of Holies. As we experience the incense altar in our prayer, we often begin with our mind and are ushered into the spirit. Now it is easy for us to be ushered into the spirit because the veil has already been taken away.

Week 20 – Day 5 (8/24)

Exo. 40:20-21 Then he took the testimony and put it into the Ark, and he set the poles onto the Ark and put the expiation cover upon the Ark above it. 21 And he brought the Ark into the tabernacle and set up the veil for the screen and screened the Ark of the Testimony, as Jehovah had commanded Moses.

16:33-34 And Moses said to Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omerful of manna in it, and place it before Jehovah, to be kept throughout your generations. 34 As Jehovah commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the testimony to be kept.

III. IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES—IN THE INNERMOST WAY

A. At the Ark of Testimony

After the Holy Place is the Holy of Holies. In the Holy of Holies we experience Christ in the innermost way. Firstly, at the ark of testimony (Exo. 40:20-21), we partake of Christ as the embodiment of God for God's testimony (Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:3a). The word testimony here actually means the law of God, the ten commandments, which were put into the ark. Since the law was God's testimony, the ark into which it was put was called the ark of testimony. According to our natural concept, we think that the law is something which regulates us and makes demands and requirements of us. In the Bible, however, the law is not mainly for regulations but for a testimony of what God is. God is pure, God is love, God is holy, God is light, etc. Because the law is made according to what God is and expresses God, it is God's testimony. Any kind of law is the expression of the one who makes it, the legislator. The ark of testimony is a type of Christ, the true testimony of God, who is the embodiment and expression of all God is. In the Holy of Holies, in the innermost part of God's dwelling place, we experience Christ as the ark of God's testimony. It is here that we enjoy Christ as the embodiment and expression of all God is, not only as the Redeemer, the life supply, and the light of life, but as all God is. The riches and the fullness of the very Godhead are our enjoyment here in Christ. Nothing in our experience of Christ can be richer and higher than this. Here in Christ we participate in the divine element, the divine attributes, and even the divine expression of our God.

B. In the Ark of Testimony

1. Enjoying Christ as the Hidden Manna

In the ark of testimony we enjoy Christ in three aspects. Firstly, we enjoy Him as the hidden manna (Exo. 16:33-34). The hidden manna was in the golden pot, signifying our experience of Christ as our life supply in the innermost way, much more inward than that signified by the showbread table in the Holy Place. When the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, they ate the outward, open manna, but now we eat the inward, hidden manna in the Holy of Holies, the manna hidden in the golden pot in the ark. This is the manna promised to the overcomer in Revelation 2:17. The open manna was food for all the people who were outside the dwelling place of God wandering in the wilderness, whereas the hidden manna is for the person who is remaining in the innermost part of God's dwelling place, no longer wandering in the soul but abiding in the presence of God in the spirit. For the enjoyment of Christ as such an innermost supply, we need to overcome all the outward frustrations, cross through all the worldly, fleshly, and soulish barriers, and enter into God's Holy of Holies.

2. Enjoying Christ as the Budding Rod

In the ark of testimony there is also the budding rod, signifying our experience of Christ as our acceptance by God in resurrection life for authority in the God-given ministry (Num. 17:3, 5, 8, 10). This is more inward than the experience of Christ as the incense for our acceptance by God. Aaron's budding rod signifies resurrection life. Where there is resurrection life, there is authority. Hence, the budding rod means authority in the resurrection life for our God-given ministry. The Israelites were debating about who had authority to represent God. When God caused Aaron's rod to bud, it signified that in resurrection he was authorized to represent God, to be God's deputy authority. It is the same today. The elders and

ministers of the divine Word must have the authority which comes from resurrection life. The incense altar only signifies our acceptance in Christ by God, whereas the budding rod not only signifies Christ as our acceptance by God but also Christ as our authority given by God in His resurrection life. Within the ark, in the Holy of Holies, that is, within the very Christ who is the embodiment and expression of God, we enjoy Christ as our God-given authority in His resurrection life. Here nothing is natural or within ourselves; everything is in resurrection, in the hidden Christ. It is here that the resurrected and hidden Christ becomes our God-given authority in His resurrection life, which is budding, even in the cold darkness, without any element of death. For the church life today, we need the experience of such a budding rod—the resurrected and hidden Christ.

3. Enjoying Christ as the Tables of the Covenant

In the ark of testimony, Christ is also experienced as the tables of the covenant, the tables of the testimony, the ten commandments, that is, as our inward law of life, testifying, enlightening, and regulating us according to God's divine nature (Heb. 8:10). We have seen the law of the ten commandments was the testimony of God. It was only a figure, a form, not the reality of all God is. But the inward law of life, which is Christ Himself as the testimony of God, is the real testimony of God. When this inward law of life testifies, enlightens, and regulates us according to God's divine nature, it infuses God's divine nature and divine attributes into our being, conforming us to the image of God that we may express Him and represent Him. The last point in our experiences of Christ is that God's divine nature is imparted into our being to make us the same as God in nature and expression. The function of the inward law of life is to permeate and saturate us by infusing into us the elements of the Firstborn Son of God, the standard model, making us a reprint of the standard model so that God might have a corporate expression of Himself to fulfill His eternal purpose. This is the ultimate consummation of the experiences of Christ. We should not linger at the altar, for that is simply the starting point of our experiences of Christ. We must come forward until we reach the ultimate experience, the inward law of life, the focus of all the experiences of Christ in God's economy.

Negatively, the inward law of life, which is the automatic working of the divine life, kills the Adamic element within us, and, positively, it supplies us with all the elements of Christ. As the inward law of life works within us, the Adamic element is continually reduced and eliminated and the element of Christ, the divine element, is gradually added into our being. This discharging of the old element and adding of the new element is metabolic transformation. Eventually, we shall become exactly the same as Christ. Christ has passed through a process to enter into His perfection and glorification. Now He is repeating this process within us, bringing us into His perfection and glorification. This is the Christian life process and it must be our daily experience. When we open ourselves to the Lord and say, "Lord Jesus, I love You and I want You to occupy me, possess me, and make me one with You," the divine life, which was sown into our being at the time of Christ's resurrection, will work automatically. This working will bring about a thorough transformation, and we shall be conformed to the image of God's Firstborn Son. We shall be wholly "sonized" and brought into Christ's perfection and glorification. As this process transpires within us and the inward law of life works Christ into every part of our being, Christ is formed in us (Gal. 4:19). This is the most secret mystery in the whole universe. Eventually, God will be wrought into man and man will be mingled with God. God and man, man and God, will thus become one entity. This is today's church and tomorrow's New Jerusalem. This is the divine economy. How blessed we are to see this! We are truly a special people.

In the portrait of the tabernacle we see a number of threes. Firstly, there are the three sections: the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. Secondly, there are the three items in the Holy Place: the showbread table, the lampstand, and the incense altar. When we come into the Holy of Holies, we see within the ark of testimony another group of three: the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the table of testimony. In each group of three, the third item is the most important. Of the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies, the Holy of Holies is the most important. Of the second three, the showbread table,

Week 20 – Day 5 (8/24) (Cont'd)

the lampstand, and the incense altar, the incense altar is the most important. Of the third three, the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the table of testimony, the table of testimony signifying the inward law of life is the most important.

The last and consummate experience of Christ as portrayed by the arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle is the inward law of life. Romans 8:2 says that this is the law of the Spirit of life. The experience of Christ begins at the cross and consummates with the Spirit. Even the Triune God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, consummates with the Spirit. The Father is far from us, the Son is close to us, and the Spirit comes into us. Although the Son and the Father may be present, without the Spirit we can have no experience of Them. All the experiences of the Triune God depend upon the consummation of the Spirit. The inward law of life is just the working of the Spirit who is the Spirit of life. God is Spirit (John 4:24). Christ, as the last Adam, was made a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b); hence, He is now the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17). The third of the Triune God is the Spirit. All our experiences of the Triune God must consummate with the Spirit. Moreover, the outer court corresponds to our body, the Holy Place to our soul, and the Holy of Holies to our spirit. Of these three parts, the spirit is the most important. Eventually, the consummate point of the experience of Christ is the Spirit of the Triune God in the human spirit of the tripartite man. The inward law of life signified by the table of testimony within the ark of testimony in the Holy of Holies simply denotes the Spirit of the Triune God working in the human spirit of the tripartite man. It is like the witnessing of the Spirit with our spirit (Rom. 8:16).

All real Christians have been to the altar—the cross of Christ. We thank God for this. But many Christians insist on staying at the altar, desiring to remain at the cross for eternity. If you were to tell them that today Christ is the Spirit, they would say you are a heretic. When we say that we must turn to and be in our spirit, we are accused of practicing mysticism. How terrible is such an accusation! Many people say, “Isn’t the cross sufficient? Isn’t the Lord’s blood precious?” We appreciate the cross and the blood as much as, if not more than, all Christians do. But this is elementary; it is just the ABC’s. If we look at the portrait of the furniture in the tabernacle, we shall see that we must come forward. We must tell all Christians to come forward. Do not merely come forward to the laver, where you may have some washings of the Spirit. Come forward to the experience of the rich supply of nourishment at the showbread table and to the enlightenment of the lampstand. But there is still more than this. We must come forward to the incense altar which ushers us into the Holy of Holies. Our incense altar today is our prayer with Christ. Many times we begin praying in our mind, but our prayer ushers us into the spirit, into the Holy of Holies.

In the Holy of Holies is the ark. The first of the three items in the ark is the hidden manna. With respect to the hidden manna, there are three layers of coverings: the tabernacle covering the ark, the ark covering the golden pot, and the golden pot covering and containing the hidden manna. Here in the golden pot we enjoy Christ in the most hidden way. It is not only in the Holy of Holies and in the ark but also in the golden pot. What is the golden pot? It is the divine nature of the Triune God which contains Christ, the standard model, as our life supply. How deep is this thought! When we enjoy Christ as our life supply in such a hidden and mysterious way, we shall experience the rod budding with authority in resurrection life. If we are to be a true minister of the Word or a genuine elder in the church, we need to have this kind of authority in the resurrection life of Christ. The budding rod brings us to the consummate item of God’s economy—the inward law of life (signified by the table of testimony), the working of the Spirit of the Triune God within us. The inward law of life is working within us, infusing the element of God into our being and making us a corporate reproduction of the standard model. In this way, God can have the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. This is what God desires today.

Study Questions

1. What is the relationship between the Sabbath rest today and in the coming age?
2. Explain how the next Sabbath is a reward and encouragement for our running the race properly today.

Heb. 7:22 By so much Jesus has also become the surety of a better covenant.

8: 6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry inasmuch as He is also the Mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted upon better promises.

MESSAGE FORTY-ONE

**THE NEW COVENANT
AND THE NEW TESTAMENT**

In this message we shall cover two important matters—the new covenant and the new testament. In Greek the same word is used for both covenant and testament. Whether it is translated covenant or testament depends on whether the person who consummated the covenant is living or dead. If the consummator is still living, that covenant remains a covenant. But if the consummator has died, the covenant immediately becomes a testament. A covenant is an agreement containing some promises to accomplish certain things for the covenanted people, while a testament is a will containing certain accomplished things bequeathed to the inheritor. The new covenant consummated with the blood of Christ is not merely a covenant, but a testament with all the things which have been accomplished by the death of Christ bequeathed to us. The term testament is the equivalent of the modern term will. Many parents, when they know that they soon will die, make a will in which they leave various things to their children. A will only becomes effective after the death of the maker of the will. In a simple word, a covenant and a testament are the same, but when the maker of the covenant is living, it is a covenant, and when he has died, it is a testament, a will. The Bible is composed of two wills—the Old Testament, the old will, and the New Testament, the new will. The Bible is not mainly a book of teachings; it is a will.

I. THE NEW COVENANT

A. A Better Covenant

The new covenant, which the Lord Jesus enacted, is better than the old covenant made through Moses. In the old covenant, all things were shadows, whereas in the new covenant everything is reality. Everything in the old covenant has been fulfilled and realized in the new covenant. Hence, the new covenant is a better covenant (7:22; 8:6).

B. Enacted upon Better Promises

The new covenant is enacted upon better promises (8:6), which were given in Jeremiah 31:31-34. In these better promises, as we have seen in previous messages, four major things are covered—the inward law of life, the blessing of God being our God and us being God’s people, the inward ability of knowing the Lord, and the forgiveness of sins. Among these four major things, the inward law of life is the focus. The old covenant was made with the outward law of letters, whereas the new covenant is enacted with this inward law of life. The old covenant was of letters; the new covenant is of life.

**C. Consummated with Better Sacrifices
and the Blood That Speaks Better Things**

Hebrews 9:23 says, “It was necessary therefore for the examples of the things in the heavens to be purified by these, but the heavenly things themselves by better sacrifices than these.” The tabernacle and all things pertaining to it were sprinkled and purified by the blood of goats and bulls (9:21-23). That was a figure showing that the heavenly things needed to be purified by the blood of better sacrifices, which are the sacrifices of Christ (7:27; 9:14, 28; 10:10, 12, 14). Heaven and all things in heaven have been defiled by the rebellion of Satan and the fallen angels who followed him in his rebellion against God. Thus, all the heavenly things needed to be purified. Christ accomplished this purification with His own blood when He entered into heaven (9:12).

Week 21 – Day 1 (8/27) (Cont'd)

The new covenant was consummated with better sacrifices and with the blood that speaks better things. Christ offered Himself as one sacrifice (9:14; 10:12). This one sacrifice, viewed from its various aspects, may be considered as many sacrifices. As Christ is the eternal Son of the living God incarnated to be the Son of Man who offered Himself to God through the eternal Spirit, so His sacrifices are better than those of animals. The animal sacrifices were shadows which could never take away sins (10:11), but His sacrifices are real and have put away sin once for all (9:26), thus finding an eternal redemption for us (9:12). Verse 22 says that “without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” Without forgiveness of sin there is no way to fulfill the requirement of God’s righteousness that by it the covenant may be enacted. But Christ’s blood has been shed for the forgiveness of sin, and the covenant has been enacted with His blood (Matt. 26:28). We are told in 12:24 that Christ’s blood “speaks better than that of Abel.” The blood of Christ is the speaking blood, speaking to God for forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, and redemption. As unveiled in Hebrews, this precious blood speaks to God for us that by it the new covenant may be enacted. Hence, it is called the blood of the eternal covenant (10:29; 13:20).

D. Having a High Priest with a More Excellent Ministry

In the old covenant the high priest was a mortal man, and his ministry was a shadow of the good things to come. But the new testament has a High Priest who is the eternal Son of God with a more excellent ministry (8:1-13). With Him there is no preventing of death. His ministry is the ministry of the kingly and divine priesthood in heaven, ministering, by His intercession, the divine life with all its riches as our daily supply to bring us into His perfection and glorification.

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT

A. God’s Promise

God’s promise is God’s word which He speaks. God speaks many different kinds of words. He may command us to do a particular thing. That command is God’s word, but it is not God’s promise. When God speaks in such a way that He promises to give, do, or be something to us, that is a promise. As we have seen, God’s promise of the new covenant is in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and includes four major things. The word of God’s promise is insured by His faithfulness (Heb. 10:23; 11:11). God’s faithfulness is the guarantee of what He speaks as a promise.

Heb. 6:16 For men swear by the greater, and for all disputes among them an oath is final for confirmation.
Gen. 22:16-18 And said, By Myself I have sworn, declares Jehovah: Because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son,¹⁷ I will surely bless you and will greatly multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens and like the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.¹⁸ And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.

B. God's Covenant

God's covenant is enacted upon God's promise (8:6). A promise is a common, ordinary word without confirmation. In the Bible, after God made His promise, He sealed it with an oath. He swore by His Godhead that His promise was confirmed. Once His promise was confirmed by an oath, it immediately became the covenant sealed by God. Hebrews 6:16 says that in all disputes an oath is final for confirmation. If you read the Old Testament carefully, you will see that God's promises were all sealed by His oath. That the promises have become a covenant means that they cannot possibly be altered. Once the promises have been confirmed by God's oath, having been made unalterable, there is no possibility of repentance or change. The promise has been sealed; it is no longer a promise but a covenant confirmed by God's oath.

After God made His promises in the Old Testament, confirming them by His oath (Gen. 22:16-18; Psa. 110:4), the Lord Jesus came and accomplished all that God had promised. By the Lord's work on earth, every item of God's promise has become an accomplished fact. For example, in Jeremiah 31 God promised to forgive our sins. The Lord Jesus did this, making propitiation for our sins on the cross as the fulfillment of God's promise. Before the Lord Jesus died on the cross, it was a promise. After He died on the cross, that promised item became an accomplished fact. Hence, forgiveness of sins is no longer a promise but an accomplished fact of history. God's promised covenant was consummated as the new covenant by the Lord's death with His blood (9:18-23; Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20). By His death, all the promises have become accomplished facts.

After His death and resurrection, the Lord ascended into the heavens, leaving with us the covenant which He had accomplished by His death. When He left this covenant with us, it immediately became a testament, a new testament bequeathed to us (9:16-17). In this testament the accomplished facts are no longer merely facts; they have all become bequests. Firstly, we had the promises; secondly, the promises became the facts; and thirdly, the facts have become the bequests. Through the Lord's death and resurrection, all the promises were fulfilled and became accomplished facts. After the Lord had left this new covenant with us, it immediately became a testament, a will, containing all the accomplished facts as our bequests. Since the Lord had accomplished everything, He went to the heavenly throne where He is now restfully sitting. As our High Priest in the heavens, the Lord is the Surety of this better covenant (7:21-22).

Four stages were needed for the consummation of the new testament: firstly, God's word; secondly, God's promise; thirdly, the new covenant; and lastly, the new testament. No longer do we just have God's word, God's promise, and the new covenant; we also have the new testament, the will. The Bible is a will in which everything has not only been mentioned, promised, and accomplished but also bequeathed. Furthermore, the Lord in resurrection is executing what He has bequeathed. We simply need to thank Him for all the bequests. If we would do this, opening wide to Him that He may execute all that He desires to execute, there will be a mass reproduction of the standard model, the Firstborn Son, for God's corporate expression. This is the heavenly vision that we all must see.

C. The Lord's New Testament

We have seen that after the Lord left the covenant with us, it became the new testament containing all the accomplished facts as our bequests. The Lord's new testament is executed by the resurrected Christ as the Mediator in the heavens (9:15; 12:24). While the Lord is resting on His throne in the heavens, He is concerned for all the heirs of this new testament. He is concerned whether the heirs are wise and diligent enough to take the bequests, or whether they are trusting in their own cleverness and trying to do something else. Because He is so concerned, He is interceding that we shall have the full realization of all the bequests contained in His bequeathed will. If our eyes are opened to see this matter of the Lord's testament, we shall be beside ourselves and say, "How poor the situation has been for over nineteen centuries. Very few Christians have realized these bequests." All Christians understand God's salvation in a low way according to the natural human concept, not in the way of bequests. Have you ever heard that the forgiveness of sins is a bequest? Were you ever taught that the imparting of the divine life, the rebirth, and our crucifixion with Christ are also bequests? We were crucified before we were born. It was accomplished by Christ on the cross and it is one of the many bequests itemized in the will. Our perfection and glorification also are bequests. In the new testament, the new will, everything is a bequest which has been accomplished already. In the last portion of this new will, the book of Revelation, the Apostle John uses the past tense very often. For example, in Revelation 20:10 John said that "the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone," and in 21:2 he said, "I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Both of these are in the past tense because every item in the will is a bequest, not a promise.

In your preaching, have you ever told people of their bequests? Most preachers say, "If you believe, God will forgive your sins and you will be born again." We need to tell people, "I have a will for you, God's will. This will clearly says that all your sins were forgiven long before you even committed them. This will also declares that your rebirth, justification, sanctification, perfection and glorification have all been accomplished by Him. All these items are bequests presented to you in the will. Will you accept it? If you are willing to take it, just thank the Lord and receive it." If a person will accept the will in this way, he will immediately have forgiveness of sins, rebirth, justification, sanctification, perfection, glorification, and even the New Jerusalem! From now on, we must enjoy and partake of all the bequests itemized in the Lord's new will. If we have this view, we shall be radically revolutionized. If you have seen this matter of the new testament, you will no longer need to pray in a begging way.

Many Christians understand Ephesians 5:19 and 20 in this way: "Praying to God continually, begging earnestly and fasting to the Lord, making petitions to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." But these verses say, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." In these verses, there is no begging but praising and thanksgiving, because the Lord has accomplished everything. The Father promised everything and the Lord Jesus accomplished everything. All the accomplished facts have been itemized in the new will as our bequests. We do not need to beg; we need to thank and praise the Lord for our bequests and enjoy them. If we know God's economy, we shall praise the Lord and thank Him for all He has accomplished and bequeathed to us. Suppose a relative has bequeathed a house to you in his will. There is no need for you to beg for that house. When you learn that the house has been given to you, all you need to do is say thank you and accept it. This is the proper Christian life. There is no need for us to beg; we simply need to take with thanks to the Lord what has already been given to us in such an extraordinary way—in the way of the new will.

2 Pet. 3:8 But do not let this one thing escape you, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day.

1 Pet. 1:20 Who was foreknown before the foundation of the world but has been manifested in the last of times for your sake,

Nothing is as binding and as strongly established as a will. No one can change it. Whatever is bequeathed in a will is final; it must go to whom it has been bequeathed. If our eyes could be opened to see that we have such a will, we would be beside ourselves with praise to the Lord. There is no need for people to wait for their rebirth, for that is an item in the will. They should simply accept regeneration as a bequest and say, “Thank You, Lord, for such a wonderful rebirth. Lord, thank You for the impartation of the divine life accomplished at the time of Your resurrection.” God’s selection is another bequest in the will, having been accomplished before the foundation of the world. Since this is clearly itemized as a bequest in Ephesians 1:4, there is no need to kneel down and pray, “O God, have mercy on me. I am a pitiful sinner, and hell is my destiny. “O God, please grant me Your selection.” How foolish it is to pray in this way! Simply say, “Father, thank You for Your selection which has already been accomplished and bequeathed to me.” God’s selection and predestination both are bequests of the new will which have already been accomplished. Romans 8:30 even tells us that we have already been glorified. Glorification, into which we shall enter in the future, is also a bequest in the new will. In God’s reckoning, it has been accomplished already.

We need to have the heavenly vision to see that all God’s blessings are bequests. Do you need peace? It is a bequest. It was promised by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and has been itemized in the new will as your bequest. Simply thank God for it and receive it. This is the new way to partake of God’s blessings. Do not be a poor beggar—you are a glorious inheritor. An heir has no need to beg; he simply receives all the bequests with thanksgiving. When my eyes were opened to see this matter of the bequests in the new testament, my whole concept was changed. This is why I do not beg. Whenever I pray, I pray with the realization that everything was already given to me nineteen and a half centuries ago as a bequest in the divine will and that I can take all I need. I can boldly say, “Praise the Lord! This is mine and I take it.”

The Lord’s new testament is executed by the resurrected Christ as the Mediator, the Executor, in the heavens. Today the resurrected Christ is executing this will by restfully interceding for us. The testament, the will, has been confirmed and validated by Christ’s death and is being executed and enforced by Christ in His resurrection. The promise of God’s covenant is insured by God’s faithfulness, God’s covenant is guaranteed by God’s righteousness, and the new testament is enforced by Christ’s resurrection power. Christ is now on the throne interceding for us to realize this testament, this will. All the seeking Christians throughout the world are hungry and thirsty. If you tell them about this will and its bequests, they will gladly receive it. They will be willing to give themselves to it and be consumed by it. This will has been given to the Lord’s people for over nineteen centuries, but few of them have realized it. By His mercy, the Lord has brought us into a full realization of His will. Now He is speeding up His recovery. The heavenly Intercessor is motivating and energizing us day by day with His heavenly “pum, pum, pum” that we may partake of all the riches of His will. This is the reason that the Christians in the Lord’s recovery are so aggressive.

God’s promises have all become accomplished facts in the new covenant, and the new covenant has been bequeathed to us as the new testament. Now, in resurrection as the ascended One sitting on the throne in the heavens, Christ is executing what He has bequeathed. The crucial point in this matter is the automatic and innate function of the law of the divine life. Praise the Lord!

MESSAGE FORTY-TWO

THE TWO MANIFESTATIONS OF CHRIST

We Christians today need to get into the book of Hebrews. I thank God that, under His sovereignty,

Week 21 – Day 3 (8/29) (Cont'd)

there was such a group of staggering Hebrew Christians in the first century. Without them, the book of Hebrews probably never would have come into existence. Do not think that the book of Hebrews was only for them. We need this book today much more than they needed it in their time. In the past eleven messages we have been on chapters seven, eight, and nine. If I were to ask you to write a conclusion to these chapters, you may find it quite difficult. But at the end of chapter nine the book of Hebrews itself gives us a summary, a conclusion, of these three chapters. This conclusion is the very matter which we shall cover in this message—Christ's two manifestations and the interval between them. These three things, Christ's two manifestations and the interval, compose God's economy.

It has been difficult for many Christians to understand the true significance of Christ's two manifestations. The two manifestations of Christ refer to His two comings. Christ has come once and He will come again. During the long period between the two manifestations of Christ to the world, He remains in the presence of God. Nearly two thousand years have passed since Christ's first manifestation. Although this is a long time as far as we are concerned, to Him it is less than two days (2 Pet. 3:8). We need to see the significance of the two manifestations of Christ and the interval between them.

Before Christ's first manifestation, there were God's plan, God's promise, and a type, a picture, of God's economy, but besides God's creation nothing had been accomplished. When we build a meeting hall, we also may have a plan and a model of the building. However, simply having these things does not mean that there is an actual building. Before Christ's incarnation, men like Abraham, Moses, and David had come and gone, but nothing had been accomplished for God's economy. Although there was the model of the tabernacle with Moses and of the temple with Solomon, nothing real was accomplished until the first manifestation of Christ.

I. THE FIRST MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST

Christ took thirty-three and a half years to complete His first manifestation. During those thirty-three and a half years, everything necessary for the fulfillment of God's purpose was accomplished. He accomplished what God needed and what we needed.

A. For the Putting Away of Sin by Offering Himself to God as the Sacrifice for Sins

Christ's first manifestation was for the putting away of sin. Verse 26 says that "once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested for the putting away of sin by His sacrifice." The Greek words translated "consummation of the ages" may also be rendered the "completion of the ages" or "end of the ages." Here it means the end of the old testament age, whereas the consummation of the age in Matthew 28:20 (Gk.) indicates the close of the church age. Christ "was foreordained" for us "before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. 1:20), and He was "slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). Actually, His being slain transpired once for all at the consummation of the ages, when He offered Himself to God in His first manifestation for the putting away of sin.

Christ put away sin about nineteen and a half centuries ago. Before He accomplished this, the priests offered the sin offering day after day. But that was not the actual putting away of sin; it was only a type, a picture. The real putting away of sin was accomplished once for all by Christ on the cross. Perhaps you were born just twenty or thirty years ago, and during your lifetime you have committed many sins, such as stealing and lying. But the putting away of sin was accomplished nineteen and a half centuries ago, long before you committed any sins. Hence, the putting away of sin is a bequest. Firstly, it was a promise; secondly, it was foreshadowed by the covering of sins; eventually, the promise and the shadow were completely fulfilled by Christ on the cross when He offered Himself as the sacrifice for sins once for all. He was "once offered to bear the sins of many" (9:28, 14; 10:12). Therefore, in the eyes of God, sin has gone and has become a history. Do not believe Satan, your feelings, or your failures. They are lies. You must tell them, "Sin was put away by Christ in His first manifestation."

Matt. 26:28 For this is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

Heb. 9: 12 And not through the blood of goats and calves but through His own blood, centered once for all into the Holy of Holies, obtaining an eternal redemption.

B. For the Accomplishment of an Eternal Redemption

Christ's first manifestation was also for the accomplishment of an eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:12 says that "through His own blood" He "entered once for all into the Holy of Holies, having found an eternal redemption." Christ accomplished this at the time He put away sins. Thus, eternal redemption also is a bequest.

C. For the Consummation of the New Covenant

The first manifestation of Christ was also for the consummation of the new covenant (Matt. 26:28). By putting away sin and accomplishing eternal redemption, Christ consummated the new covenant. Hence, the new covenant is also a bequest.

D. For the Bequest of the New Testament

Eventually, the first manifestation of Christ was for the bequest of the new testament (9:16-17). We have seen that when the new covenant was bequeathed, it became the new testament. In His first manifestation, Christ accomplished everything, put all that He had accomplished into a will, and left His will with us. In this will we have, as our bequests, everything Christ has accomplished. Since everything has been accomplished, neither He nor we need to do anything more. If we have this vision, we shall see that within the thirty-three and a half years of His first manifestation, Christ accomplished everything and put it into a will, into the new testament. Do not think that the New Testament is a book of promise or prophecy. No, the entire New Testament is a will. If your grandfather's will were full of promises and prophecies, it might take eighty years for it to be fulfilled. You might not live long enough for them all to be fulfilled. This is exactly the way many Christians take the New Testament. Today many Christians do not have a will; they have a book of promise and prophecy. They are waiting for the promises and prophecies to be fulfilled by and by. But remember, even Revelation, a book of prophecy, is included in the New Testament which is a will. As I pointed out in the previous message, even in a book of prophecy such as Revelation, many of the verbs are in the past tense, indicating that they have already been fulfilled and accomplished.

We need to have a clear vision and see that Christ has accomplished everything. If we see this, we will not strive for anything, but rest in all that Christ has done. I am happy because Christ has accomplished everything for me. Blessed is he who sees the vision that Christ has accomplished everything for us. Christ is sitting in the heavens because all the work has been done. He is not laboring or striving but restfully sitting there. In the Bible, to sit means that the work is finished. Everything needed for the completion of God's eternal plan has already been fulfilled by Christ in His first manifestation. All that He has accomplished has been bequeathed to us in the new testament as our bequests.

II. IN THE INTERVAL

A. Entering into the Holy of Holies in the Heavens

After He had accomplished the necessary things through His death and resurrection, Christ ascended to heaven and entered into the Holy of Holies in the heavens. Verse 24 says, "Christ did not enter into the holy places made by hand, but into heaven itself." The tabernacle in the Old Testament was a figure of the

Week 21 – Day 4 (8/30) (Cont'd)

true one in the heavens. The earth is the outer court of this true tabernacle. After He had finished His work in the outer court, Christ, as the High Priest, entered into the Holy of Holies of the true tabernacle.

B. Appearing before God

Christ has entered into the Holy of Holies in the heavens so that He might appear before the face of God for us (9:24). Since He has accomplished everything on earth, He is now restfully sitting in heaven before God. The only time we are told that He stood up was when Stephen was being stoned (Acts 7:55-56).

C. Ministering in the True Tabernacle as the High Priest

In the true tabernacle, Christ is ministering as the High Priest (8:1-2). What is Christ doing as the High Priest? He is interceding for us that everything which He has accomplished might be wrought into our being. In some of the previous messages we have seen this matter of Christ's heavenly intercession. We may recall how Melchisedec came to minister the bread and wine to Abraham after he had interceded for him behind the scene. Likewise, Christ, our Melchisedec, is secretly interceding for all who love Him and seek Him. As He is interceding for us in the heavens, He is also the all-inclusive and all-pervading Spirit. The all-inclusive Spirit works in us according to Christ's heavenly intercession, motivating the law of life within us to function and causing the standard model, the Firstborn Son of God, to be wrought into our being. This is transpiring on earth today. To say this is not guesswork; it is the revelation of God's Holy Word which is shining over us as a heavenly vision. In these days, many of us have been under the shining of this vision. This vision will become a governing vision. Praise the Lord that Christ is ministering in the true tabernacle today!

D. Executing the New Testament

During the interval between His first and second manifestations, Christ is executing the new testament (8:6; 9:15; 12:24). To execute the new testament simply means to motivate the law of life within us and to make every bequest of the new will real in our being. Once we see what Christ is doing in us today, we shall never be the same. What Christ is doing in us is worthy of eternal remembrance. When we get into eternity, we may recall the day we saw the glorious vision of Christ's heavenly ministry. When this ministry has been completed, Christ will be manifested the second time.

- Heb. 9:27-28 And inasmuch as it is reserved for men to die once, and after this comes judgment,
28 So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second
time to those who eagerly await Him, apart from sin, unto salvation.
- 1 Pet. 2:24 Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we, having died to sins,
might live to righteousness; by whose bruise you were healed.
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III. THE SECOND MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST

A. Apart from Sin

Verse 28 says that Christ “shall appear to those who wait for Him a second time, apart from sin, unto salvation.” The second manifestation of Christ has nothing to do with sin, because sin has already become a history. As man must die once and be judged after having died (v. 27), so Christ died once to bear man’s sins (v. 28; 1 Pet. 2:24) and suffered the judgment for man on the cross (Isa. 53:5, 11). This book very much stresses the fact that sin has been put away by Christ’s sacrifice in His first manifestation. Since Christ has put away sin in His first appearing (9:26; 1 John 3:5), His second appearing will be apart from sin, having nothing whatever to do with it.

B. Unto Salvation

Verse 28 says that Christ will appear a second time “unto salvation.” “Salvation” here does not refer to the salvation from hell to heaven. It has a wider and higher meaning, covering the following aspects:

1. For the Redemption, the Transfiguration of Our Body

First of all, the very salvation which Christ will bring to us in His second manifestation is for the redemption, the transfiguration, of our body. When we were saved, we were regenerated in our spirit (John 3:5-6). Now we are in the process of being transformed in our soul (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). Then at Christ’s second coming for the completion of the salvation of our entire being, He will transfigure our vile body into a glorious one (Phil. 3:21). That will be the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23), the first aspect of Christ’s appearing “unto salvation” in His second manifestation.

2. For the Deliverance from the Vanity and Slavery of Corruption of the Old Creation

The second aspect of the salvation by Christ’s second coming is the deliverance from the vanity and slavery of corruption of the old creation into the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:18-23). The entire old creation has been subjected to vanity and is under the slavery of corruption. Even we who have been saved and who have the enjoyment of the Spirit are also under the vanity and the slavery of corruption of the old creation. At His second coming, Christ will free us from this vanity and slavery and deliver us into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

3. For Our Glorification

At His second coming, Christ will glorify us (Rom. 8:17), that is, He will bring us into His glory to fulfill the word in Hebrews 2:10. Our glorification is the final goal of God’s salvation in Christ (Rom. 8:29-30). We have been chosen, predestinated, called, and justified. Now we are being sanctified through the process of transformation in life. Then in His second manifestation, we shall be glorified and reach the final goal of God’s salvation in Christ. This is the third aspect of Christ’s coming salvation.

4. For the Full Sonship

In regeneration we were born of God and became the sons of God (John 1:12-13). In this new birth we received the divine sonship in our spirit (Rom. 8:15). After this, we began to enjoy this sonship through the

Week 21 – Day 5 (8/31) (Cont'd)

transformation of our soul. The more we are transformed in our soul, the more we enjoy the sonship which has been given to us in our spirit. This sonship will become full when our body of the old creation is transfigured into a body of the new creation. This means that the redemption of our body is the full sonship of our new birth. This will be the fourth aspect of Christ's salvation in His second manifestation.

5. For the Full Taste of God

God's salvation in Christ is to work Himself into us as our enjoyment. He has given to us His Spirit in our spirit as the firstfruit for our enjoyment (Rom. 8:23). This firstfruit of the Spirit is the foretaste for our enjoyment of God. The full taste will be brought in for our enjoyment by Christ's second manifestation. When our body is transfigured and our entire being, spirit, soul, and body, is fully saturated with the divine element of the Triune God, we shall enjoy God in full. That will be our full taste of God, the last aspect of Christ's coming salvation.

The very salvation which Christ will bring us in His second coming will be such a wider and higher one and will fulfill the final and ultimate goal of God's all-inclusive salvation in Christ. Before His second manifestation, Christ is ministering to us with this goal in view. His more excellent ministry in the heavens today, the ministry of His kingly and divine priesthood with His heavenly intercession, is building up such a salvation. When He sees that the building up of this wonderful salvation has been accomplished, He will appear the second time. That will be His second manifestation in God's economy.

Isa. 53:10, 12 But Jehovah was pleased to crush Him, to afflict Him with grief. When He makes Himself an offering for sin, He will see a seed, He will extend His days, And the pleasure of Jehovah will prosper in His hand. 12 Therefore I will divide to Him a portion with the Great, And He will divide the spoil with the Strong; Because He poured out His life unto death And was numbered with the transgressors, Yet He alone bore the sin of many And interceded for the transgressors.

MESSAGE FORTY-THREE

**CHRIST'S SACRIFICES
REPLACING AND TERMINATING
THOSE OF THE OLD COVENANT**

The book of Hebrews tells us many times that Christ has dealt with sin once for all (1:3; 2:17; 7:27; 9:26; 10:12). The repeated mention of the fact that Christ, through His sacrifice, has put away sin was necessary because of the strength of the Jewish tradition in the ancient times. The Jews only knew to go to the altar and offer the sacrifice for sin. Daily, the sacrifices for sin were offered; they were also offered yearly on the day of atonement. Thus, the mind of the ancient Jews was occupied with the sin offering. Because of the strength of the Jewish tradition regarding the sin offering, after dealing with the matter of the accomplishment of the sacrifice for sin in chapters seven, eight, and nine, the writer gives us a further conclusion in 10:1-18.

The main point of this supplementary conclusion is that the Hebrew Christians had to realize that none of the sacrifices offered by the Levitical priests could put away sin or perfect the worshippers. Even their Old Testament predicted in Isaiah 53:10 and 12 that Christ would come to be the sacrifice for sin, that is, to replace and terminate the Levitical sacrifices. Since Christ, the unique sacrifice, has done this, it would have been foolish for the Hebrew believers to go back to the temple and offer the sacrifice for sin again. Sin has been put away and has become a history. Therefore, 10:18, speaking of sins and lawlessnesses, says, "where forgiveness of these is, there is no longer an offering for sin." This is a logical conclusion.

In God's economy, Christ did two main things: He put away sin, which had come in to frustrate God's eternal purpose, and He imparted Himself into us as the divine life which is working within us and spreading into all the inward parts of our being. The main thought in 10:1-18 is that Christ has put away sin, accomplishing what all the Levitical sacrifices were unable to do. Having put away sin once for all, Christ has now imparted Himself into us as the divine life, so that through the working of this divine life we may become the corporate reproduction of Himself.

**I. THE LAW HAVING A SHADOW
OF THE COMING GOOD THINGS**

The law of the Old Testament was not the reality; it was a shadow of the coming good things (v. 1). These coming good things are what Christ is and does. What the law had could not accomplish anything. It is Christ, the reality of all the shadows in the Old Testament, who has accomplished everything for God's economy.

**II. THE LAW, BY ITS CONTINUAL AND YEARLY SACRIFICES,
NEVER BEING ABLE TO PERFECT THE WORSHIPPER**

The law, by its continual and yearly sacrifices, was unable to perfect those who drew near to God (vv. 1-2). The sacrifices offered according to the law could not purify the offerers' conscience of sins. However often they offered the same sacrifice for sin, their conscience could never be at peace and they could never be perfected before God.

**III. THE LAW'S SACRIFICES
REMINING OF SINS YEAR BY YEAR**

The sacrifices offered according to the law could not put away sins; rather, they reminded the people of them. Every year on the day of atonement the Jews were reminded of their sins. God's intention in these sacrifices of shadow was to remind the Jews that they were sinful and that they needed Christ, the Messiah, to take away their sins. According to God's intention, whenever they offered the sacrifice for sin, they should have looked unto Christ. The law's sacrifices were just a reminder of their sins, not a purifier of them.

**IV. IT BEING IMPOSSIBLE FOR
ANIMAL BLOOD TO TAKE AWAY SINS**

As the law's sacrifices were a shadow, not the reality, it was impossible for their animal blood to take away sins (v. 4). It is the precious blood of Christ, the real sacrifice for sin, that takes away sins. Therefore, it would have been vain for the Hebrew believers to go back to Judaism to offer sacrifices for sin again.

**V. CHRIST COMING WITH A BODY TO
REPLACE THE SACRIFICES OF THE LAW**

All the sacrifices offered according to the law were a shadow of Christ. At the fullness of time, Christ came with a body of blood and flesh to replace the sacrifices of the law. In the flesh, He offered Himself to God once for all to take away sins. Verses 7, 9, and 10 tell us that it is the will of God to take away the first, the animal sacrifices of the old testament, so that the second, the sacrifice of Christ of the new testament, might be established to replace the sacrifices of the old testament. Hence, it would have been foolish for the Hebrew believers to go back to offer the animal sacrifices which had already been replaced by Christ.

**VI. CHRIST HAVING SANCTIFIED US THROUGH
THE OFFERING OF HIS BODY ONCE FOR ALL**

Christ, as the real sacrifice for sin which has taken away sins, has sanctified us through the offering of His body once for all (v. 10). Sin had separated us from God, but Christ, through His redemption, has separated us from sin and has brought us back to God. This is to sanctify us unto God. Christ has thus sanctified us once for all.

**VII. THE PRIESTS OF THE LAW STANDING DAILY TO OFFER
THE SAME SACRIFICES WHICH CAN NEVER TAKE AWAY SINS**

Verse 11 says, "Every priest stands daily, ministering and offering often the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." The priests in the old covenant stood daily and offered the same sacrifices again and again, because what they offered could never take away sins. Their standing was a sign that the taking away of sins had not been accomplished. It was Christ's offering of Himself that has accomplished the taking away of sins.

**VIII. CHRIST SITTING DOWN FOREVER ON
THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, AFTER HAVING
OFFERED ONE SACRIFICE FOR SIN**

While the old covenant priests stood daily offering the same sacrifices again and again, Christ has put away sin (9:26) by offering Himself to God as the unique sacrifice for sin. Hence, as verse 12 says, He "sat down forever on the right hand of God." His sitting in heaven is a sign and proof that the taking away of sins has been accomplished. His sitting there is forever. He no longer needs to do anything for sin, for He has done it once for all. His sitting down forever after having offered one sacrifice for sin is in contrast with the priests' standing daily, offering the same sacrifices again and again.

Jer. 31:33-34 But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares Jehovah: I will put My law within them and write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. 34 And they will no longer teach, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for all of them will know Me, from the little one among them even to the great one among them, declares Jehovah, for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

**IX. BY ONE OFFERING CHRIST
HAVING PERFECTED FOREVER
US WHO ARE BEING SANCTIFIED**

Verse 14 says that by “one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified.” Although the other sacrifices never perfected anyone, Christ’s unique sacrifice has perfected us forever. Through His offering, Christ has not only sanctified us once for all but also perfected us forever. Through that one sacrifice of Christ, we have not only been separated from sin and brought back to God but also have been perfected before God.

**X. THE HOLY SPIRIT TESTIFYING THAT
OUR SINS AND LAWLESSNESSES ARE FORGIVEN**

At this point we need to read verses 15 through 17. “And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after having said, This is the covenant which I will covenant with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their hearts and upon their minds I will inscribe them; Then He says, And their sins and their lawlessnesses I will by no means remember anymore.” In this section of the Word, the writer was trying his best to prove to the Hebrew believers that there was no longer any need of offering the sacrifice for sin, because Christ had accomplished the putting away of sins. The problem of sin has been solved. Now he stresses this fact by pointing out that in Jeremiah 31:33 and 34, which he had quoted in chapter eight for the inward law of life, the Holy Spirit also testifies to this effect. In Jeremiah 31:33 and 34, after the Holy Spirit said that God would put His laws upon our hearts, He then said that God would not remember our sins any more. This proves that the Holy Spirit testifies that our sins have been taken away and that the problem of sin has been solved. Not only in Isaiah 53:6, 11, and 12 was there the prediction that Christ would bear our sins, but also in Jeremiah 31 there was the testimony of the Holy Spirit that our sins would be taken away and that God would no longer have any remembrance of them.

According to our natural understanding of the new covenant, the forgiveness of sins is the first item. However, it is the last item, even a supplementary one. The new covenant is mainly concerned with three things: with the law of life which is written into our being; with God being God to us and us being a people to Him; and with the inner ability of knowing God. These three things are eternal. But some brothers and sisters, still remembering their sins, may ask, “What about our sins?” They need a supplement telling them to be at peace about their sins, for God will not remember them any longer, because they all have been taken away by the sacrifice of Christ. Here, in chapter ten, after repeating the main item of the new covenant, the inward law of life, mentioned in chapter eight, the Spirit says that the Lord will by no means remember our sins and lawlessnesses. Since the Lord will by no means remember our sins any more, we should not remember them either. But it is difficult for us to forget our sins. Although God forgives and forgets our sins, and although we may realize that our sins have been forgiven, we cannot forget them. The remembrance of our sins is still subconsciously deep in our being.

What does it mean to forget our sins? It is to consider ourselves as never having sinned. Since believing in the Lord Jesus, have you ever considered yourself to be so sinless? God does. When we go to Him, saying, “Father, I wish to repent of my sins,” He may say, “What are you talking about? Are you not one of My children? None of My children has ever sinned.” To forgive sins means to forget them, to think of them as never having existed. Not only does God forgive our sins; He no longer remembers them. Not only in His administration are our sins put away, but they even have vanished from His memory. In eternity the

Week 22 – Day 2 (9/4) (Cont'd)

Father will say, “I have many sons who have never sinned. In My divine memory there is no such thing as sin.” Only God has this kind of forgetfulness. The more we try to forget our sins, the more we recall them. You may still remember the day you stole money from your father. While we still remember it, if we go to our Father about it, we shall discover that He has forgotten it. Hallelujah! Have you ever realized that we all have a share in such a wonderful forgiveness? How marvelous it is! Yet this is just a supplement to the three main items of the new covenant, the most important of which is the law of life. God is our God, and we, His people, have the inner ability to know Him. From now on, we should forget sin and not talk about it. Any local church which still talks about sin is not up-to-date. We must not be a sin-talking church but a life-law-talking church. Sin is history and life is here. We now have the law of life within us.

XI. NO LONGER ANY OFFERING FOR SIN

Since Christ has accomplished the sacrifice for sin and has terminated it, there is no longer any offering for sin (v. 18). This does not mean, as some Christians misinterpret this verse, that if we sin after being saved, there is no longer any offering for our sin and that we will not be forgiven anymore. It means that since Christ has accomplished the offering for sin once for all and has terminated it, there is no longer the need to offer any sacrifice for sin. This was a strong word to the early Hebrew Christians who were considering going back to their old custom of offering the sacrifice for sin. They should have known that the offering for sin had been accomplished and terminated by Christ. Their need was not to go back to the shadow of the animal offerings, but to come forward to partake of the resurrected Christ and enjoy all He had accomplished for them through His offering of Himself to God.

Today we also need to see that our sins have been taken away by the death of Christ and that the problem of sin has been solved once for all. Since sin is over and has become a history, we no longer need to be bothered by it. Our attention must be turned from the Christ on the cross to the Christ in the heavens. We must enjoy the heavenly Christ as our life and all we need in following Him and running the heavenly race. When we enjoy the Christ who is in the heavens, we are truly under the new covenant participating in all the bequests of the new testament. This is the goal of this book.

Heb. 10:19-22 Having therefore, brothers, boldness for entering the Holy of Holies in the blood of Jesus, 20 Which entrance He initiated for us as a new and living way through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 And having a great Priest over the house of God, 22 Let us come forward to the Holy of Holies with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

MESSAGE FORTY-FOUR

**COME FORWARD TO THE HOLY OF HOLIES
AND DO NOT SHRINK BACK TO JUDAISM**

In this message we come to a very sober and solemn portion of the book of Hebrews (10:19-39). Chapters seven, eight, nine, and the first eighteen verses of chapter ten are quite exciting. However, beginning with 10:19 the writer presents another warning. Many Christians do not understand what is covered in this warning. In this message we must see this matter clearly.

This warning, the fourth one in Hebrews, is a warning to come forward to the Holy of Holies and not to shrink back to Judaism. In chapter nine we saw the two tabernacles which symbolize two covenants and two ages. There is the danger of not coming forward to the second tabernacle but of shrinking back to the first. We must leave the first tabernacle, the first covenant, and the first age, and go on to enter into the second tabernacle, into the second age or dispensation. We must go on to the Holy of Holies, enter into the new covenant dispensation, and live in the new age. After presenting a complete picture of these things, the writer was very concerned that the Hebrew believers would not go on. Thus, he gave them a warning, telling them of the danger of shrinking back to Judaism and not coming forward to the new testament. He seemed to be saying, “Hebrew believers, come forward from where you are staggering. If you won’t come forward, you will be in danger of shrinking back.” Coming forward is in sharp contrast with shrinking back. It is a terrible thing to shrink back! Because shrinking back is such a dreadful thing, we must view this fourth warning in a very sober way.

Firstly, I would like to say a word about the phrase “come forward.” This phrase is used four times in Hebrews regarding three things. In 4:16 we are told to come forward to the throne of grace; in 7:25 and 11:6 we are told to come forward to God; and in 10:22 we are told to come forward to the Holy of Holies. In 10:22, of course, the phrase “Holy of Holies” must be in italics, because it is not found in the original Greek text. However, if you consider the context beginning from verse nineteen, you will see that the meaning certainly is to come forward to the Holy of Holies. The King James Version of 10:22 says to “draw near,” but it does not tell us what we are to draw near to. After much study, I have come to the conclusion that the best translation of the Greek word is not “come,” “draw near,” or “approach to” as some versions render it; it is “come forward.” We must come forward to the Holy of Holies, to the throne of grace, and to God Himself.

God is on the throne of grace, and the throne of grace is in the Holy of Holies. This is the scene of the new covenant age. Wherever we may be, we must come forward to the Holy of Holies, the throne of grace, and to God. When we do this, we come forward to the new age, to the new economy, dispensation, and administration in and through which God fulfills His purpose. God’s eternal purpose can only be fulfilled with God sitting on the throne of grace in the Holy of Holies in this new covenant age. Coming forward is not merely a matter of our salvation or even of our glorification; it is for the fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose. For us to be saved or glorified is a small thing, but for God’s eternal purpose to be accomplished is a tremendous matter. Thank God that He has included us in this. Our coming forward and enjoying the new testament is altogether for Him and His purpose. It is for Him to be expressed and for His eternal purpose to be accomplished. This requires four things: God on the throne, the throne of grace, the Holy of Holies, and the new covenant age. If any one of these four items is missing, it is impossible for God to accomplish His purpose. How serious this is!

Week 22 – Day 3 (9/5) (Cont'd)

Not only were the pagans and the heathen far away from these four things, but even the Judaizers who had the old covenant were far away from them. Moreover, many Christians today are also far off from these four items. Therefore, there is the call to come forward. We thank God that today the sky is crystal clear above us and we can understand that to come forward means to come forward to the Holy of Holies, to the throne of grace, and to God, and that this means we must come forward to the new covenant dispensation. Where are you? Are you still at the altar beholding the One crowned with thorns, or are you touching the throne of grace in the Holy of Holies gazing upon the One crowned with glory? How we need to come forward! Coming forward is the focal point of the book of Hebrews, and it is very crucial that we all see it. Once we see it, we should never depart from it.

I. THE FIRST TABERNACLE, THE HOLY PLACE, BEING A FIGURE

The first tabernacle, that is, the Holy Place, is only a figure, not the reality. As we have seen, all the things in the Holy Place, such as the showbread table and the lampstand, are the types of Christ, not the reality.

II. THE SECOND TABERNACLE, THE HOLY OF HOLIES, BEING REALIZED BY THE NEW COVENANT DISPENSATION

The second tabernacle, which is the Holy of Holies, is realized by the new testament dispensation (9:3, 8, 10). The Holy of Holies is a reality. It is realized by the new covenant dispensation in which we now are experiencing its reality. The presence of God, the shekinah glory of God, God's meeting with man, and God's speaking, which are in the Holy of Holies, are all real. They are not types but realities which are fully realized and experienced by us in the new testament dispensation.

II. THE OLD COVENANT AGE BEING TERMINATED AND THE NEW COVENANT DISPENSATION HAVING BEEN INAUGURATED

The old covenant age has been terminated by the death of Christ, and the new covenant dispensation has been inaugurated by His resurrection and ascension. In His ascension, He is the "High Priest of the good things that have come" (9:11). He is now ministering in "the greater and more perfect tabernacle" in the heavens to execute the new covenant for God's economy.

- Heb. 9:24 For Christ did not enter into a holy place made by hands, a figure of the true, but into heaven itself, to appear now before the face of God for us;
- 4:12 For the sword of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
- 2 Tim. 4: 22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.
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III. THE WAY TO ENTER THE HOLY OF HOLIES HAVING BEEN CUT

Verse 19 says, “Having therefore, brothers, boldness for entering the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus.” The Holy of Holies today is in heaven, where the Lord Jesus is (9:12, 24). Then, how can we enter it while we are still on earth? The secret is our spirit, referred to in 4:12. The very Christ who is in heaven is also now in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22). He, as the heavenly ladder (Gen. 28:12; John 1:51), joins our spirit to heaven and brings heaven into our spirit. Whenever we turn to our spirit, we enter into the Holy of Holies. Here we meet with God who is on the throne of grace.

We enter the Holy of Holies by a “new and living way, which He dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh” (v. 20). The way into the Holy of Holies has been cut. According to the Greek, the word “new” in this verse means “freshly slain.” Through Christ’s death on the cross, the way has been “freshly slain” for us. What was slain? Not only the flesh but the entire old creation. In this verse, the veil, which is His flesh, signifies the old creation, including us. On the veil were cherubim (Exo. 26:31) which signify the creatures (Ezek. 10:15). When the veil was rent, the cherubim were also rent, signifying that when the flesh of Christ, which is typified by the veil, was crucified, all the creatures also were crucified with His flesh. This flesh has been slain. According to Matthew 27:51, when the Lord Jesus died, the veil was rent from top to bottom, meaning that it was not rent by anyone on earth but by God in the heavens. The old creation has been slain and a new and living way to enter into the Holy of Holies has been cut. Now through the riven veil of the flesh and by the blood of Jesus we can enter into the Holy of Holies. His death and His blood are still available to us today.

The veil in verse 20 is the second veil (9:3) within the tabernacle which, as we have seen, typifies the flesh of Christ. When Christ’s flesh was crucified, this veil was rent, thus opening the way for us who were excluded from God, who is signified by the tree of life (Gen. 3:22-24), to enter into the Holy of Holies to contact Him and take Him as the tree of life for our enjoyment. This also implies that since our old man has been crucified with Christ, we have an open way to contact and enjoy God in our spirit as our life and life supply.

IV. HAVING BOLDNESS TO ENTER THE HOLY OF HOLIES THROUGH THE BETTER SACRIFICES OF CHRIST

Through the better sacrifices of Christ, we have boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies (9:23; 10:19). It is not a small thing to enter the Holy of Holies, for there the very God is sitting on the throne of grace. In order to enter into such a place we must have boldness, and we have it by Christ’s death and by His blood. By the Lord’s death and His blood we have the boldness to enter the Holy of Holies at any time we want to, unlike the high priest in the Old Testament, who could only enter into it once a year.

**VI. HAVING A GREAT PRIEST
OVER THE HOUSE OF GOD**

Verse 21 says that we have “a great Priest over the house of God.” This is deep. We have seen that we are the house of God (3:6). But if we are in the outer court, we do not have the right position to be the house of God. In order to be the house of God we must come forward to the Holy of Holies, because it is only there that Christ, our High Priest, takes care of the house of God. Since the Holy of Holies is joined to our spirit, we can only be the house of God when we are in our spirit. If we would turn from our spirit to our flesh, we would no longer be the house of God but a house of scorpions and snakes. When Christians fight and argue with one another, they are not the church, the house of God; they are scorpions and snakes. Although they may be saved, they do not live in the saved life but in the scorpion life. According to Ephesians 2:22, the house of God is in the spirit. If we live like scorpions, we could never enjoy Christ’s presence. Only in the Holy of Holies in the spirit does Christ, our High Priest, take care of the house of God.

VII. COMING FORWARD TO THE HOLY OF HOLIES

Let us come forward to the Holy of Holies (v. 22), that is, to the new covenant dispensation. The Holy of Holies not only denotes a place, but also means a covenant, an age, and a dispensation. In chapter nine we saw clearly that the tabernacle was not merely a place but also the symbol of a covenant and an age. The call to come forward to the Holy of Holies includes coming forward to the new covenant and to the new covenant age. We must come to the Holy of Holies with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our body washed with pure water. For us to come forward to the Holy of Holies, our heart must be true, our faith must be with full assurance, our conscience must be sprinkled, and our whole being must be washed. We should not consider this as a light thing. We must be very serious in this matter.

**VIII. HOLDING FAST THE CONFESSION
OF OUR HOPE UNWAVERING**

“Our hope” (v. 23) refers to Christ and to all we shall partake of in Him. He is our hope of glory (Col. 1:27). The redemption of our body, which He will accomplish at the time of His second appearing, is also our hope. Even now, He, as our indestructible life, is our hope, regardless of our situation. As our High Priest with the more excellent ministry of His kingly and divine priesthood, He is our hope in our daily life. By His intercession on our behalf He takes care of us and is able to save us to the uttermost. This is what we believe. This is our confession. We must hold fast this confession without any wavering of our faith so that we might come forward to enter into the Holy of Holies to enjoy the heavenly Christ.

**IX. CONSIDERING ONE ANOTHER
FOR INCITING TO LOVE AND GOOD WORKS**

For the proper church life, we need to consider one another (v. 24). To be isolated from others is to commit suicide in the church life. To consider one another is to increase life in inciting to love and good works. Good works here and in 13:21 are the good things which, in the eyes of God, are mainly related to the fulfillment of His purpose. If we consider one another in this way, we shall be kept in the church life.

Heb. 10:25-26 Not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near. 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,

X. NOT FORSAKING THE CHURCH TO SIN WILLFULLY

Now we come to a crucial point. The writer warns the Hebrew believers not to forsake the church to sin willfully, that is, to go back to Judaism to offer the sacrifice for sin which has been terminated (vv. 25-26, 18). Verses 25 and 26 say, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day drawing near. For when we sin willfully after receiving the full knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.” For the Hebrew believers to shrink back to Judaism and offer again the sacrifice for sin would be to do something which God had terminated. For the Hebrew believers at their time and in their situation to forsake the assembling of themselves together would have been to forsake the new covenant way of contacting God, to forsake the church, and to return to their old religion—Judaism. That would have broken God’s administration of grace, thus constituting a serious sin before God. It would have been to “sin willfully after receiving the full knowledge of the truth.” Truth here refers to the things disclosed in the foregoing chapters and verses, which affords the Hebrew believers the full knowledge that God has annulled the old covenant and has established the new. To sin willfully means to forsake the assembling of ourselves together with the church. The Hebrew believers had been instructed to abandon Judaism and remain under the new covenant. If they had returned to Judaism, they would have forsaken assembling themselves with the church. This constitutes a willful sin in the eyes of God after receiving the knowledge of the truth, after knowing that God had forsaken Judaism, which was formed according to the old covenant, and had established the new and living way of contacting God according to the new covenant.

Verse 26 says that “there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” for those who sin willfully. If the Hebrew believers had forsaken the church and returned to Judaism, there would have remained no sacrifice for sin in the economy of God, for all the sacrifices of the old covenant have been altogether replaced by the one sacrifice of Christ. Since Christ has once for all offered Himself as the real sacrifice for our sins (7:27; 10:10, 12), the sacrifice for sin has ceased (10:2), having been taken away by Christ (10:9). Many Christian teachers misinterpret verse 26, saying that if we sin willfully after being saved our sins cannot be forgiven because there is no more sacrifice for sin. This interpretation is terrible! As we have seen, the willful sin mentioned here is forsaking the church and shrinking back to the old covenant after knowing that God had annulled it and established a new one. Forsaking the church to return to Judaism to offer the sacrifice for sin when there was no longer any such thing, was, in the eyes of God, a willful sin.

A. Trampling Under Foot the Son of God

Verse 29 says, “By how much do you think he shall be thought worthy of worse punishment who has trampled under foot the Son of God.” In the new covenant the Son of God replaces all the sacrifices of the old covenant. If the Hebrew believers would still return to Judaism to offer any of the old sacrifices, they would in effect be trampling under foot the Son of God. They would be despising Him, disregarding Him, and putting Him under their feet.

B. Regarding the Sanctifying Blood of the Covenant a Common Thing

Verse 29 also speaks of regarding the blood of the covenant a common thing. If the Hebrew believers would have returned to Judaism to offer the old sacrifices and rely on the blood of the slain animals, they would in effect have regarded the precious blood of Christ a common thing. That would have been a serious disregard of the unique redemptive work of Christ. Since animal blood was common, it could be

Week 22 – Day 5 (9/7) (Cont'd)

offered again and again. However, if, after receiving Christ, the Hebrew believers returned to Judaism to offer again the sacrifices for sin, they would have been making the blood of Christ the same as animal blood. This is an insult to Christ.

C. Insulting the Spirit of Grace

This verse also mentions insulting the Spirit of grace. Under the new covenant, through the redeeming blood of Christ, the Hebrew believers had become partakers of the Holy Spirit (6:4), the Spirit of grace. If they had returned to Judaism to offer the sacrifices for sin, this would have been against the work of the Spirit of grace who was indwelling them and working in them and who would have been insulted by their willful sin. The Spirit of grace would never have agreed with this and would have reacted within them. This is serious.

XI. DO NOT SHRINK BACK TO JUDAISM

In verses 38 and 39, the writer told the Hebrew believers to live by faith and not shrink back to ruin. For the Hebrew believers to shrink back to Judaism was to shrink back to ruin, which is not eternal perdition but punishment by the living God (vv. 29-31). The ruin mentioned here is the punishment, as mentioned in verses 27 through 31, of those who forsake the new covenant and return to Judaism, thus trampling underfoot the Son of God, regarding Christ's precious blood common as animal blood, and insulting the Spirit of grace.

By now, we all should be able to understand this fourth warning. The economy of God has been presented clearly. We have seen the old way and the new way, and we have been warned to come forward along the new way and not to shrink back to the old. To shrink back to the old way after having such a clear word is to commit a willful sin. At the time this epistle was written, to shrink back meant to forsake the new testament church and to give up the new testament dispensation and economy of God. This was not a small matter; it was a very serious willful sin. The writer warned them that if they did such a thing, they would suffer punishment.

According to God's economy, all the old sacrifices have been terminated and the old way has been closed. If the Hebrew believers would have shrunk back to the old way to offer sacrifices according to the law, it would have been in vain, for, in the eyes of God, such a thing had been terminated. This is the correct meaning of this warning. However, many Christians misinterpret it, saying that if you sin after you are saved, you are sinning willfully and there is no possibility of having your sins forgiven. Under the Lord's light, we have seen that to sin willfully is to give up God's economy and to go back to the old way of traditional religion. Here, at the end time, the Lord has presented us with His up-to-date economy. We know what is the old way and what is the new way. The old way has been closed, and the new way has been freshly slain. For the sake of the Lord's recovery and God's economy, we must come forward to take the new way.

Eph. 1:4-5 Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love, 5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

John 6: 39 And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing but should raise it up in the last day.

MESSAGE FORTY-FIVE

NOT ETERNAL PERDITION, BUT DISPENSATIONAL PUNISHMENT

This message, entitled “Not Eternal Perdition, but Dispensational Punishment,” is necessary that we might have a basic foundation in the Lord’s recovery. The term dispensational punishment is not likely to be found in other Christian books or messages, for it is a new term in the Lord’s recovery. This term is necessary because many Christians have confused the matter of dispensational punishment with eternal perdition. According to the New Testament, these are clearly two separate things, having nothing to do with one another. Eternal perdition is for unbelievers, whereas dispensational punishment is for believers. A great deal of trouble has been caused by mixing together these two things.

In today’s Christianity, there are two main schools of theology regarding salvation. One school says that salvation is eternal. According to this school, once we have been saved, we are saved eternally, regardless what we do after we are saved. Salvation can never be lost. The second school claims that if we are not careful after being saved, we might be lost again. Most of the so-called holiness churches belong to this school, believing that a person may be saved and lost again and again. Because their salvation goes up and down like an elevator, we may call this concept of salvation “elevator salvation.” Once, when I was less than thirty years of age, a preacher came to our town saying that we could be saved in the morning and lost again that night, and then by repenting and confessing our sins we could be saved again the next morning. When I heard about this, I boldly told the saints in that town that this was nonsense and that our God would never give us such a salvation.

Apparently those who preach and teach “elevator salvation” have some ground in the Bible; actually they do not. They are like those who see the letter C and, having poor eyesight, mistake it for a G. They make a big mistake in interpreting certain passages in the Bible. They use all the verses which speak of dispensational punishment to support their belief that a saved person can be lost again. Those who follow this school of theology never have any assurance. If, as far as salvation is concerned, they are up when they die, they will be saved forever. But if they are down, they will be lost eternally. What kind of gospel is this? It is terrible!

However, it is also wrong to teach that no matter what you do after you have been saved there will be no problem and you will continue to be saved. According to this teaching, as long as we have the assurance of being saved for eternity, it is all right. We need to be unloaded and drop the teaching of both these theological schools and see what the pure Word of God says concerning this matter.

**I. THE SECURITY OF GOD’S ETERNAL
SALVATION FOR THE BELIEVER**

God’s salvation is eternal. Once we have received it, it is secured eternally. This is proved by eleven things.

A. By the Will of God

God’s eternal salvation is secured by the will of God. Ephesians 1:5 says that we have been predestinated according to God’s will, and John 6:39 tells us that the Father’s will is that none of those whom He has given the Son should be lost. This is the will of God concerning our salvation. God’s will is more steady and stable than a rock. Although heaven and earth may be removed, God’s will remains forever. It does not go up and down like an elevator.

B. By the Selection and Calling of God

God’s salvation is secured by the selection and calling of God. He has chosen us, selected us, before the

Week 23 – Day 1 (9/10) (Cont'd)

foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). It is not we who selected Him but He who selected us (John 15:16), and His selection is not of our works but of Himself who calls (Rom. 9:11). He has not only predestinated us but also called us (Rom. 8:30), not according to our works but according to His own purpose (2 Tim. 1:9). His calling is irrevocable. He will never repent of it nor regret having called us. His selection and calling have nothing to do with our works; our works can never affect them, for they are unchangeable. Both God's selection and calling, being initiated by Him, not by us, are the security of our salvation.

C. By the Love and Grace of God

The salvation we have received of God is also secured by His love and grace. It is not we who loved Him, but He who loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10). Nothing whatsoever shall be able to separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38-39). We are changeable, but the love of God is unchangeable. Furthermore, God has not saved us according to our works, but according to His grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9). Our works may often fail, but God's grace never fails. Our salvation is secured not by our works but by God's prevailing grace which comes out of His unchanging love.

D. By the Righteousness of God

God's eternal salvation is secured by the righteousness of God which is revealed to faith (Rom. 1:16-17). For the showing forth of His righteousness, God must justify us, and He has justified us who believe in the Lord Jesus (Rom. 3:26). It is the righteous God who has justified us (Rom. 8:33). His righteousness is the foundation of His throne (Psa. 89:14, Heb.). His throne is established forever and nothing can shake it. Our salvation, being secured by God's righteousness, is as unshakable as God's throne.

E. By the Covenant of God

Our salvation is secured by the covenant of God. God has saved us by His new covenant (Heb. 8:8-13). It has definitely been covenanted that He has written the law of life within us and that He will never remember our sins. As the faithful God, He will never break His covenant (Psa. 89:34). Not only His righteousness but also His faithfulness binds Him. Hence, His covenant with His faithfulness is a security of our salvation.

F. By the Power of God

The security of God's eternal salvation is also by the power of God. The Lord Jesus said that His Father is greater than all, and that no one can snatch us out of the Father's hand (John 10:29). God the Father is more powerful than anything. He has a mighty arm, and strong is His hand (Psa. 89:13). No one can pluck us out of His hand.

G. By the Life of God

Our salvation is eternally secured by the life of God. The Lord said, "I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever" (John 10:28, Recovery Version). Do you believe that the eternal life can be recalled once it has been given to us? To say that once we are saved we can be lost again means that the eternal life which has been given to us would be called back. This is altogether illogical. Once we have the eternal life, we shall never perish.

H. By God Himself

Our salvation is secured by God Himself. God has chosen, predestinated, called, justified, cleansed, and saved us. With Him there is no shadow of change (James 1:17); He is unchangeable (Mal. 3:6). After doing so much for us that we might be saved, do you think that God would change in this matter? Can our condition or situation affect God's nature? Can it change God's doing? No, it is impossible. Our salvation is secured by the unchangeable God Himself.

I. By the Redemption of Christ

Our salvation is secured by the redemption of Christ. Christ has died for us (Rom. 8:34), and the redemption accomplished by His death is an eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12). By offering Himself once to God He has perfected us forever (Heb. 10:14), and His eternal redemption issues in our eternal salvation (5:9). Thus, He is able to save us to the uttermost, not only in extent but also in time (7:25).

Heb. 10:28-29 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without compassion on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 By how much do you think he will be thought worthy of worse punishment who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has considered the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

J. By the Power of Christ

Our eternal salvation is also secured by the power of Christ. In John 10:28 and 29 the Lord assures us that not only the Father's hand but also His hand will keep us from perishing. The Father is strong, and He is powerful. No one can snatch us out of the Father's hand, nor out of His hand. We are secured by two divine hands, the Father's hand of love and the Son's hand of grace, both of which are powerful to keep.

K. By the Promise of Christ

Finally, our salvation is secured by the promise of Christ. The Lord Jesus said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37, Recovery Version). Here we see that the Lord promised that He would never reject or forsake anyone who came to Him. All these verses are very clear and unambiguous, giving a solid foundation for the security of our salvation. Nothing can annul these clear verses. Thus, all God's children may have the proper faith to believe that His salvation is eternal.

Those who believe that a saved person can lose his salvation appeal to such verses as Hebrews 10:29, which says, "By how much do you think he shall be thought worthy of worse punishment who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" We must deal with this verse very carefully. It speaks of a saved person, for it mentions one who has been sanctified by the blood of Christ. Yet such a one may be worthy of worse punishment because he has trampled under foot the Son of God, regarded the precious blood of Christ as common, and insulted the Spirit of grace. Undoubtedly, the Spirit of grace was working graciously in him, but he did not listen to it.

In order to understand this verse, we must consider the context beginning with verse 25, which speaks of "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom with some is." As we have seen, for the Hebrew believers to forsake the assembling of themselves together meant that they were forsaking the church to return to Judaism to offer the animal sacrifices again. Then verse 26 speaks of sinning willfully "after receiving the full knowledge of the truth." As we pointed out in the last message, truth here refers to the things disclosed in the foregoing chapters and verses, which afforded the Hebrew believers the full knowledge that God had annulled the old covenant and established the new. If after receiving this knowledge, they still went back to offer the sacrifices for sin, they would have been sinning willfully. They knew that, according to God's economy, there no longer remained a sacrifice for sin because all the sacrifices had been terminated by the unique sacrifice of Christ. By considering verse 29 in its context, we see that it refers to a truly saved person. All the Hebrew Christians were saved, but they were in danger of forsaking the Christian assembly, that is, forsaking the church, and returning to Judaism. If they had done this, they would have been worthy of some punishment. Although this verse indicates that a saved person may be punished, it does not mean, as those who follow the second school misinterpret it, that a saved person can be lost. It certainly does not refer to eternal perdition but to a type of punishment of believers.

II. THE ETERNAL PERDITION FOR THE UNBELIEVERS

The "worse punishment" in 10:29 is different from suffering the second death (Rev. 20:6, 14; 21:8). To suffer the second death is to perish in the lake of fire for eternity, that is, to suffer eternal perdition. This is most terrible. Some argue that there is no such thing as eternal perdition, saying that God is love and could

Week 23 – Day 2 (9/11) (Cont'd)

not bear to have His creatures suffer in the lake of fire for eternity. But they seem to forget Revelation 14:10-11; 19:20; 20:10, 14-15; and 21:8. These verses tell us that the lost, the perished ones, will suffer in the lake of fire for eternity. God is God. When He loves, He truly loves. But when He is severe, He is surely severe. Since the unbelievers face such a terrible eternal perdition, they certainly need the gospel.

III. THE DISPENSATIONAL PUNISHMENT FOR THE FAILURES OF THE BELIEVERS

A. God's Discipline or Chastening

Although the believers cannot be lost, they may suffer some dispensational punishment for their failures (10:29). In these days we all have heard the call to come forward and not to shrink back. But suppose some would shrink back. They would not be lost, but they would be dealt with by God, undergoing some dispensational punishment. In the Bible dispensational punishment is called chastening, discipline, or chastisement. God's punishment is His discipline. When parents punish their children, it does not mean that they permanently cast them away. Rather, parents discipline their children with a good intention. I know of one Christian couple who warned their children about their schoolwork. They told their children that everything had been prepared for them and that it was their responsibility to do well in school. If at the end of the school year they had earned A's, they would receive a great reward, but if they failed, they would be put into a dark room for a day. This Christian couple kept their word. At the end of the year, the child who earned the A's received a reward, while the one who failed received some punishment. One of the parents disciplined him, even shedding tears, saying, "Child, I love you, but I cannot help it. You must go to that room for the day and have nothing to eat." They did not cast him away. That dark room was not even a temporary prison—it was a closet of love. The child's parents displayed the best love for him, and the next semester he also received A's in school. This is an illustration of dispensational punishment.

Our heavenly Father is loving and wise. Do you think that He will always allow us to fail? Certainly not. What then will He do if we fail? He will give us a loving discipline and put us in a dark room of love for a time. There, in the darkness, His children will be disciplined for their own good.

B. Some in This Age

All sound fundamental Christian teachers of the Bible believe that God chastises His children. In Hebrews 12:5-11 we have a word of warning concerning us. Verses 5 and 6 say, "You have completely forgotten the exhortation which reasons with you as with sons, My son, do not make light of the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when reproved by Him; for whom the Lord loves He disciplines and scourges every son whom He receives." This word mainly refers to God's discipline in this age. Are you a son of God? If you are, then you may be scourged. Verse 7 says, "It is for discipline that you are enduring; God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom the father does not discipline?" When this book was written, the Hebrew believers were suffering chastisement. God was dealing with them as with sons. Although I have disciplined my own children, I have never disciplined the children on the street, because they are not my children and I have nothing to do with them. Verse 8 continues, "But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are bastards and not sons." If we are without the Father's discipline, then we must be bastards, not sons. I certainly would not want to be a bastard. "Furthermore, we have had the fathers of our flesh as discipliners and we respected them; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed disciplined us for a few days as it seemed good to them, but He for our profit that we might partake of His holiness" (vv. 9-10). Since holiness is God's nature, to partake of God's holiness is to partake of His nature. It was common, unholy, for the Hebrew believers to remain in Judaism. They needed to be separated to God's new covenant that they might partake of God's holy nature. For this purpose, persecution was aroused to discipline them that they might be separated from the common to the holy.

Luke 12:45-46 But if that slave says in his heart, My master is delaying his coming, and begins to beat the male servants and the female servants and to eat and to drink and become drunk, 46 The master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and will cut him asunder, and will appoint his portion with the unbelievers.

C. Some in the Next Age

Although all the fundamental teachers of the Bible believe that God chastens His children, nearly all of them would say that His chastisement is only in this age, not in the coming age, claiming that God will never chastise us after we die. But I cannot find such a teaching in the Bible. Luke 12:45-48 reveals clearly that when the Lord Jesus returns, He will chastise His unfaithful servants. At the judgment seat of Christ, all the believers will be judged concerning how they have lived and what they have done after they were saved. Then the judgment will be made whether they will receive chastisement or not. This is similar to the end of the school year when the children present their parents a record of their grades, and the parents decide whether the children will receive a prize or a punishment. At the Lord's coming back, we all will present our record to Him, and He will decide what we shall receive. God's discipline is not only in this age but also in the coming age. As we have pointed out, the next age will still belong to the old heaven and the old earth. Thus, even the coming age of the kingdom will be a time for the Father to deal with His children.

What is mentioned in 10:27-31 as a warning does not refer to eternal perdition for the unbelievers but to God's dispensational punishment of His children who do not obey His word. We must be assured that once we have God's salvation, we shall never lose it. However, if we do not care for God's word, we shall be punished. To be punished by God is not to be hated by Him. Rather, it is a sign that God the Father loves us. He disciplines whom He loves, not treating them as bastards but as dear sons. Surely the Father will discipline us.

How we must thank the Lord that He has opened His economy to us and that He has given us the warnings that we might go along with His economy! If we do not heed God's warnings, we shall be punished. The time of our punishment is altogether up to Him, not us. It is the parents who determine what is the best time to deal with their children. They decide whether to deal with them immediately or to wait. Likewise, our Father knows the right time to deal with us, whether it is in this age or in the coming age. Luke 12:45-48; 19:22-26; Matthew 24:48-51; and 25:26-30 reveal clearly and definitely that when the Lord Jesus comes back, He will deal with His unfaithful servants.

By now we should be clear that the salvation which we have received from God is eternally secure. Nevertheless, we must be careful regarding our way of going on with God after we have been saved, especially after receiving the full knowledge of the truth as it has been given to us in these messages on Hebrews. If these messages do not help you to go on, then they will be unprofitable as far as your welfare is concerned. If we know the Lord's will and yet do not do it, we shall be beaten more. But if we are ignorant of the Lord's will and do not do it, we shall be beaten less. Luke 12:48 says, "He that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." If you do not have the heart to go on with the Lord, you are better off to be left ignorant. But we are no longer ignorant. May we all heed the warning to come forward and not to shrink back. May our prayer be, "Lord Jesus, help me to come forward."

MESSAGE FORTY-SIX

THE KINGDOM REWARD AND THE GAINING OF THE SOUL

In the fourth warning in the book of Hebrews (10:19-39), two important things are mentioned—the

Week 23 – Day 3 (9/12) (Cont'd)

worse punishment (v. 29) and the great reward (v. 35). These two phrases are both heavy and meaningful; they are the keys to this fourth warning. The writer of this epistle was not concerned with our salvation, for according to what he has written, it is eternally secure. The writer has made it quite clear that Christ has offered Himself to put away sin once for all (7:27; 9:26, 28) and that He has obtained for us an eternal salvation (5:9). Having entered once for all into the Holy of Holies, He has found for us an eternal redemption (9:12). The writer knew that our salvation was fully, thoroughly, and completely secure and that we have been saved forever. However, he was very concerned whether his readers would receive a great reward or suffer punishment.

Throughout the centuries, most Christians have not seen the punishment as well as the reward. Many books deal with the matter of reward, saying that if we follow the Lord faithfully and do His will, we shall receive a crown as a reward. However, it is difficult to find a book which speaks about the other side—punishment. Most Christian writers do not want to touch this subject, because it will cause them difficulty. Nevertheless, “worse punishment” is mentioned in 10:29, and we cannot ignore it. We shall either suffer a worse punishment or receive a great reward.

Our God is fair, righteous, and wise. He knows how to handle everything and how to deal with His children. As our wise Father, He has a just way of dealing with us, His children: He will reward the faithful and obedient ones and punish the unfaithful and disobedient ones. According to most of the teachings, it seems that God only rewards the faithful ones but does not punish the unfaithful. This is not logical. Our Father is much wiser than this. To say that He will reward the faithful ones and discipline the unfaithful ones is logical. Our God is logical and purposeful, never doing anything without a meaning. The clear word in His oracle says definitely that if we are faithful, He will reward us, but if we are not, He will punish us.

We need not be concerned about our salvation. We may be assured that it is eternally secured according to His holy word. The question, however, is this: how shall we follow the Lord after we have been saved? Will we conduct ourselves according to the law of life? Will we come forward to the Holy of Holies, or shrink back to the Holy Place and even to the outer court? This is up to us. If we come forward, we shall receive a reward. But if we shrink back, we shall suffer punishment because we break God’s administration and disobey His will. We all must come forward to the second covenant and dive into the new covenant economy of God, forgetting our sins and devoting our full attention to the law of life that will make us His reproduction. If we care for this, He surely will reward us. But if we do not care for it, shrinking back instead, He will punish us according to His warning. It is a serious matter to break God’s administration. If we do this, breaking the law of life, we shall suffer a worse punishment than those who broke the law of letters. We need to be deeply impressed with this matter of the “worse punishment” and the “great reward.” Perhaps we even need to underline these words in our Bibles as a reminder of their significance. These words represent our future destiny. Which shall it be—a worse punishment or a great reward?

The Apostle Paul was not assured that he had the reward until he reached the end of his life. When he wrote the book of 1 Corinthians, he was very much concerned that he might be a castaway in the heavenly race (9:24-27). Even when he wrote the book of Philippians, he was still pressing on toward the mark for the prize (Phil. 3:14). Only in 2 Timothy 4:7 and 8, written shortly before his martyrdom, did he have the assurance that the crown of righteousness was awaiting him. Do not be assured that you have already attained the reward. You have not yet finished your race.

We all must be clear about four words: salvation, perdition, reward, and punishment. The reward is not salvation; it is something in addition to it. Salvation is by grace through faith, whereas the reward is according to the life and work we have after being saved. As the reward is different from salvation, so is punishment different from perdition. As we have pointed out, perdition is for the unsaved while punishment is for believers. Thus, punishment here is something altogether different from perdition. We have been saved forever and we can never perish. The unbelievers face two choices—salvation or

perdition. We, the saved ones, also must consider two possibilities—receiving a reward or suffering some punishment. All the saints in the Lord's recovery must be clear about this, for it is a matter of God's economy, God's way of dealing with His children.

I. THE ETERNAL SALVATION

A. By Grace through Faith

Eternal salvation, as Ephesians 2:8 clearly reveals, is by grace through faith, having nothing to do with our works. Whatever we have done, whatever we are doing, and whatever we shall do cannot affect our salvation. It is absolutely a matter of God's grace through our faith in the Lord Jesus.

B. Not of Works

Salvation is not of our works (Eph. 2:9; Rom. 11:6). It does not depend on what we do, on what we are, nor on the way we behave ourselves. As it is by grace through our faith, it is no longer of our works; otherwise, grace is no longer grace.

C. The Saved One Shall Never Perish

The saved one shall never perish. Do not pay any attention to the teaching which says that we can be saved and lost again and again. John 10:28 and 29 are a strong word of assurance that the saved one shall never perish. The Lord Jesus said, "I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father Who has given them to Me is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand" (Recovery Version). The life we have received is the eternal life which nothing can terminate. And we have two hands holding us, the Lord's hand of power and the Father's hand of love, out of which nothing can snatch us. Our salvation is eternally secured by the eternal life and by the two divine hands.

C. The Saved One May Not Receive a Reward, but Suffer a Loss

First Corinthians 3:15 reveals that a saved one may not receive a reward but "suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire" (Gk.). We need to pay close attention to this verse and its context. Verse 8 says, "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." This verse indicates that here it is not a matter of salvation but of reward. In verse 12 we see two categories of materials with which we may build: gold, silver, and precious stones—the produce of the law of life; wood, hay, and stubble—the produce of the flesh. Verses 13 and 14 continue, "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." Once again, it is not a matter of salvation but of reward. If a man's work is burned, he shall suffer loss, but he shall not suffer perdition. "He himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire." Paul was very careful in writing this verse. He said that we may suffer loss but still be saved. Lest we think that since we shall still be saved there can be no problem, Paul said that we "shall be saved, yet so as through fire." There is no need for me to interpret this verse. Simply take it as it is. It certainly is not a good thing to be saved "as through fire." I do not know what kind of fire that will be, but I do not want to pass through it.

Week 23 – Day 4 (9/13)

Heb. 10:27 But a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fervor of fire, which is to consume the adversaries.

35-37 Do not cast away therefore your boldness, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance in order that, having done the will of God, you may obtain the promise. 37 "For in yet a very little while the Coming One will come and will not delay.

What we have been saying here is the pure word of God. It is not, as some have falsely said, the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. That is devilish. What we are doing here is simply quoting the pure word of God. We should not pick and choose verses out of the Bible according to our taste. Everyone loves John 3:16 and many have it written on a scroll hanging on a wall in their home. But I have never seen a scroll with 1 Corinthians 3:15 on it. Chapter three of 1 Corinthians is on the building of the church. Today God has only one concern—the building of the church. If we are right with God in this matter, we shall receive a reward. If not, we shall suffer loss but be saved “yet so as through fire.”

Hebrews 10:35 uses the word “reward,” and 10:27 speaks of “fiery zeal.” Moreover, 12:29 says, “Our God is also a consuming fire.” This consuming fire deals not with the faithful ones, but with the unfaithful, and it is not for reward but for punishment. As we have seen, such punishment has nothing to do with eternal perdition. We must always discern between punishment and perdition, just as we discern between reward and salvation.

II. THE KINGDOM REWARD

The reward mentioned in verse 35 is the kingdom reward because it will be given to us for our enjoyment in the coming kingdom, not in this age. Today in the church life the kingdom is an exercise. If we are faithful in the kingdom exercise today, we shall be rewarded with the kingdom as an enjoyment in the coming age. Then it will be the kingdom reward.

A. By Righteousness

Eternal salvation is by grace, but the kingdom reward is by righteousness. In 2 Timothy 4:8, Paul says that a crown of righteousness, the symbol of this reward, not a crown of grace, was laid up for him. So in verse 18 of the same chapter, he has the assurance that the Lord will save him into His heavenly kingdom. This was due to his faithfulness in following and serving the Lord. The Lord, the “righteous judge,” will give him this reward of the kingdom according to His righteousness, not according to His grace.

B. According to Work

The kingdom reward will be according to our work. In Matthew 16:27 the Lord Jesus said that at His coming back He will reward us according to our works. In Revelation 22:12 He says, “Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” As we have already seen, 1 Corinthians 3:8 says that we shall be rewarded according to our labor. Eternal salvation has nothing to do with our works, but the kingdom reward will be altogether according to our works which we have by the Lord’s life after being saved.

C. Decided by the Judgment Seat of Christ

This reward will be decided by the judgment seat of Christ. Second Corinthians 5:10 says, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” The judgment seat of Christ will be set up at His coming back. At the judgment seat the Lord Jesus will judge all His believers. None of the unsaved will be judged at that time, for all of them will be judged at the white throne a thousand years later (Rev. 20:11-15). There, at the judgment seat of Christ, the decision will be made regarding what reward we shall receive—the enjoyment in the kingdom or some punishment.

D. Given to Us at the Lord's Coming Back

This reward will be given to us at the Lord's coming back. In 1 Corinthians 4:5 Paul says, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." At His coming back, the Lord will judge everything and will reward every one of His believers. We must take heed to the warning in this verse. At His coming back, the Lord "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." Today we can hide the things of darkness and the counsels of our hearts. But all this will be brought to light and made manifest at the Lord's coming back. Then every one of us shall receive a reward accordingly.

E. Enjoyed in the Coming Kingdom

The kingdom reward will be enjoyed in the coming kingdom. Both Matthew 25:21 and 23 say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." According to the context of Matthew, to enter into the Lord's joy is to enter into the coming kingdom. The faithful servants will participate in the Lord's joy in the kingdom as a positive reward.

F. Participating in the Coming Sabbath Rest

The kingdom reward is to participate in the coming Sabbath rest. As we have seen in previous messages, this coming Sabbath rest will be Christ's joy and reign in the millennium (Heb. 4:9; Rev. 20:4, 6). There, in the thousand-year kingdom, we shall share Christ's joy and participate in His reign as kings.

G. Paul Having Strived for This Reward

Paul strived for this reward. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, he tells us that he was running the race for the reward. Then in Philippians 3:13 and 14, he was still running the race. Only at the time immediately before his martyrdom did he know for certain that the reward was awaiting him and that the crown of righteousness had been prepared for him and for all who love the Lord's appearing (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

H. Moses Having Looked to This Reward

Because Moses was willing to suffer the reproach of Christ, he will receive the reward of the kingdom (Heb. 11:26). He was not allowed to enter into the rest of the good land because of his failure at Meribah (Num. 20:12-13; Deut. 3:26-27; 32:50-52). But he will be with Christ in the kingdom (Matt. 16:28—17:3). By referring to this, the writer surely intended to encourage his readers, who were suffering persecution for Christ's sake, to follow Moses by esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the things they lost and by looking away to the reward.

I. In Addition to Eternal Salvation

The kingdom reward is in addition to the eternal salvation which is mentioned in 5:9. Based upon Christ's eternal redemption (9:12), eternal salvation has been given to us freely and eternally according to God's eternal selection of us. That is eternally secured. However, after receiving this eternal salvation, how we would behave ourselves is a problem. Hence, according to God's wisdom, in addition to this eternal salvation, a reward is promised as an incentive to us that we may be faithful in our living by the Lord and in our working for Him.

Eternal salvation is by faith, having nothing to do with our work (Eph. 2:8-9), whereas the kingdom reward is for our work after we are saved (1 Cor. 3:8, 14). We may not receive the kingdom reward even though we are saved, because we are void of the work which the Lord would approve (1 Cor. 3:15). The Hebrew believers were here charged not to miss the kingdom reward—the coming Sabbath rest, the enjoyment of Christ and the reign with Christ in the coming age.

**J. Of the Promise Differing from
the Promise of the Eternal Inheritance**

The kingdom reward is of the promise mentioned in 10:36, which is different from the promise in 9:15. The promise in 10:36 is the promise of the Sabbath rest mentioned in 4:9, in which we shall participate in the reign of Christ in the coming kingdom. That will be the great reward mentioned in verse 35 for the gaining of the soul mentioned in verse 39. This is conditioned on our endurance and doing the will of God. The promise in 9:15 is the promise of eternal inheritance based upon Christ's eternal redemption, not on our work. The eternal inheritance in the promise in 9:15 is by the eternal redemption of Christ, whereas the great reward (v. 35) in the promise in 10:36 is for our reward in doing the will of God.

The will of God mentioned in 10:36 was for the Hebrew believers to take the new covenant way (vv. 19-23) and remain with the church (v. 25), not shrinking back to Judaism (vv. 38-39) but suffering persecution (vv. 32-34). For this they will receive the promise of a great reward at the Lord's coming back. The promise of eternal inheritance is included in God's eternal salvation. The promise found in 10:36 is the reward for the overcomers, while the eternal inheritance is for all the believers who have received eternal salvation.

Verse 34 speaks of "a better possession, and an abiding one." This better and abiding possession is "the eternal inheritance" and the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" (1 Pet. 1:4). Under the old covenant, the Jewish people inherited earthly things as their possession; but under the new covenant, the believers inherit the heavenly riches as their possession. This better and abiding possession was a great incentive to the Hebrew believers to suffer the loss of earthly things.

Verse 39 speaks of shrinking back to ruin. For the Hebrew believers to shrink back to Judaism would have been to shrink back to ruin, which is not eternal perdition, but punishment by the living God. The ruin mentioned here will be the punishment, as mentioned in verses 27 through 31, to those who would forsake the new covenant and return to Judaism, thus trampling under foot the Son of God, regarding Christ's precious blood common as animal blood, and insulting the Spirit of grace. As the kingdom reward is a positive reward, so the punishment must be a negative one.

- Heb. 10:39 But we are not of those who shrink back to ruin but of them who have faith to the gaining of the soul.
- Phi. 3: 21 Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory, according to His operation by which He is able even to subject all things to Himself.
- Matt. 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.
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III. THE GAINING OF THE SOUL

Verse 39 speaks of “the gaining of the soul.” The Greek word translated “gaining” may also be rendered “saving,” “preserving,” “possessing.” Very few Christians understand the meaning of this phrase. Some refer it to the salvation from hell. That is not accurate. The gaining of the soul is different from the salvation of our spirit. In 1 Corinthians 5:5, speaking of a sinful brother who was to be put out of the church, Paul said to “deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” Even such a fallen, sinful brother would have his spirit saved, because the salvation of the spirit is eternal. However, the gaining of the soul is conditional. There is no need for us to be sinful in order to lose our soul. Even if we shrink back from God’s economy, we shall lose it. Most Christians have only one thought—going to heaven or going to hell, being saved or perishing. But neither the Bible nor our wise Father is that simple. Our Father has many ways of dealing with us. As we shall see, this gaining of the soul is somewhat related to the kingdom reward.

A. For Our Whole Being to Enjoy the Coming Sabbath Rest

The gaining of the soul is for our whole being to enjoy the coming Sabbath rest, that is, to share in Christ’s joy and glory in the coming kingdom (4:9). Our being is of three parts—spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23), and our soul is different from our spirit. At the time when we believed in the Lord Jesus and were saved, our spirit was regenerated with the Spirit of God (John 3:6). But we must wait until the Lord Jesus comes back for our body to be redeemed, saved, and transfigured (Rom. 8:23-25; Phil. 3:21). As to the saving or gaining of our soul, it depends upon how we deal with it in following the Lord after we are saved and regenerated. If we lose it now for the Lord’s sake, we shall save it (Matt. 16:25; Luke 9:24; 17:33; John 12:25, Gk.; 1 Pet. 1:9), and it shall be saved, or gained, at the Lord’s coming back (Heb. 10:37). This will be the reward (10:35) of the kingdom to the overcoming followers of the Lord (Matt. 16:22-28).

B. A Great Reward to Our Suffering for Following Christ

To gain our soul in the coming age will be a great reward (v. 35) to our suffering for following Christ in this age. If we care for the enjoyment of our soul, the psychological pleasures, and do not follow Christ faithfully today, we shall suffer the Lord’s discipline in our soul in the coming age. If we are willing to lose the enjoyment of our soul for the Lord’s sake today, we shall have the full enjoyment of the Lord for our whole being, especially for our soul, in the coming age. That will be a reward to our suffering today.

C. Conditioned on Our Losing of the Soul in This Age for the Lord’s Sake

The gaining of the soul is conditioned on our losing of it for the Lord’s sake. In the Gospels the Lord tells us many times that if in this age we lose our soul for His sake and the gospel’s, at His coming back in the next age we shall gain it (Matt. 16:25; Luke 9:24; 17:33). Although these verses are very familiar to so many of the saints, not many know what they really mean. As human beings, we have a spirit, but we are a soul. A human being is a soul. To lose our soul in this age means to suffer for the Lord’s sake and for the sake of the gospel. When we suffer, our whole being suffers. This means that we lose our soul. Those who

Week 23 – Day 5 (9/14) (Cont'd)

are rich and comfortable today, enjoying their physical life, are having enjoyment for their soul. Not many Christians are willing to pay the price to follow the Lord strictly, because they do not want to suffer in their soul; they want to enjoy their life today, desiring luxurious cars, large houses, and many worldly things. They are unwilling to lose their soul.

Losing our soul in this age is to suffer for the Lord's sake in a human way. If we follow the Lord today, we shall certainly suffer for His sake. Because you are a faithful and straight follower of Jesus Christ, your teachers may not give you the higher grade, and you may not receive a promotion on your job. Many such things are related to losing our soul. Our destiny in this age is to lose our soul and all human enjoyment. This loss of our soul today is the condition of our gaining it in the next age. To gain our soul in the next age is to enter into the Lord's joy and reigning. According to the parable in Matthew 25, the Lord said to the faithful servants, "Enter thou into the joy of thy lord." To enter into the Lord's joy is to enter into His reign in the coming kingdom. This age is for us to suffer; the next age is for our enjoyment.

In these last two messages we have seen clearly the matters of dispensational punishment, the kingdom reward, and the gaining of the soul. The punishment which the defeated Christians will suffer is simply the losing of the soul. If in this age you gain your soul, being unwilling to pay the price to follow the Lord, you will lose your soul at the Lord's coming back. That will be a real punishment. While the overcomers enter into the Lord's joy and reign, you will be put aside. To lose our soul in the coming age does not mean that we ourselves shall be lost. It means to be excluded from the enjoyment and reign of Christ when He rules over the nations in the millennial kingdom. Those who gain their soul in this age and lose it in the next will not be co-kings of Christ in the coming age of the kingdom. If we lose our soul in this age for the Lord's sake, we shall gain it in the next and enter into the Lord's joy and reign, having the full enjoyment of human life as we rule with Him over the nations. This is a great reward.

I would like now to give a further word concerning this matter of the reward. The Bible is very consistent about this. Receiving the reward is not simply doing good works, glorifying God, and receiving a prize at the Lord's coming back. In a sense, this is our natural concept of the reward. We need now to look at this matter in another way.

The gaining of the soul equals perfection, and perfection equals glorification. To be glorified, to be perfected, and to gain our soul in the next age all refer to one thing—the reward. What then is the reward? It is the goal of God's salvation. God's salvation has a goal. This goal is not that we go to heaven. The goal of God's salvation is to make us the same as His Firstborn Son. Romans 8:29 says that we have been, "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He should be the firstborn among many brothers" (Recovery Version). Here we see God's goal—that His many sons, who are Christ's many brothers, might be conformed to the image of His Firstborn Son. God is working today to bring the many sons into glory, that is, to bring all the saved ones into the glorification of the Firstborn Son of God. God has not saved us with the goal that we might go to heaven, but that we might be transformed and conformed to the image of His Son so that God might have for eternity a corporate expression of Himself. This is the goal of God's salvation.

In His foresight God saw that many of His selected ones would not cooperate with Him, not give Him the opportunity to work out the goal of His salvation. Thus, in His wisdom, He decided to make the goal of His salvation a reward to the selected and saved ones. If there were no weakness, lack, or failure on the part of the saved ones, God would have no need of making the goal of His salvation a reward, for whoever was saved would come into that goal. But only those who cooperate with Him will reach the goal, and that goal will become a reward to them.

Consider the example of the children of Israel. God's intention in calling, saving and bringing them out of Egypt was to make them a kingdom of priests (Exo. 19:4-6). Every Israelite was to be a priest. But when they came to Mount Sinai, they fell short of God's goal through worshipping the golden calf. Immediately, the goal of the priesthood became a reward for one tribe, the tribe of Levi, which stood with God. Although the other eleven tribes did not perish, they did not reach the goal of God's salvation. The priesthood, which was the goal for every tribe, became the reward for just one tribe.

The principle is the same with us today. God's goal is to make us all the same as His Firstborn Son. If we cooperate with God, He will work within us day by day, and every day we shall enjoy Christ to the uttermost. This is the highest enjoyment. If we have this enjoyment of Christ today, when He comes to reign, we shall enter into His reign as His co-kings and partners. This is God's goal. But many of God's selected ones do not cooperate with Him to such an extent today. They are missing the full enjoyment of Christ which they can have now. Although they have been saved, they have no enjoyment of Christ, living each day in the same way as those who do not have Christ. Although they belong to Christ, having Him as their life and Savior, they do not give Him the opportunity to live within them. As a result, they are missing the enjoyment of Christ today and will certainly miss the enjoyment of reigning with Him in the millennial kingdom. Due to their negligence today, they will miss the goal of God's salvation in the coming age.

Those selected ones of God who refuse to cooperate with Him will not only miss the highest enjoyment of Christ today and the reigning with Christ in the coming age, but, because they break God's will and do not follow His economy, they will also be disciplined by Him. That discipline, that punishment, should be a warning to them to seek after God's goal. Do not say to yourself, "If I am sloppy and do not reach God's goal, I am ready to suffer His discipline. After that discipline is over, everything will be all right." This is not true. After you have undergone God's punishment, you will still need to reach His goal. Sooner or later, all God's selected ones must reach His goal. Suppose I have two children in school. One of them receives excellent grades and graduates; the other fails and does not graduate. Because of this, he is disciplined and put into a dark room for a day. Do you think that after he has suffered for awhile he has no need to study? No, he must still make up his lessons. The purpose of the discipline is to compel him to study. After being punished, he must still read, study, and finish all his lessons; otherwise, he would never graduate from school. The school is patient. If he does not pass in the next semester, he will have to do it in another one. The parents' intention is that all their children do their schoolwork and receive a reward at the end of the semester, enjoying a good time with them as satisfaction for their soul. But the disobedient children will lose this reward, be disciplined, and later be required to finish their lessons. The parents will never let them go until they have completed their schoolwork and graduated. The principal of the heavenly school is very patient. He will wait until every student in His school graduates and is built into the New Jerusalem. Every believer must reach the New Jerusalem, God's ultimate goal.

Now we should be clear concerning the matters of reward and punishment. God's salvation has a goal, and we all must reach it. Most Christians do not see what is God's goal in His salvation. But by His mercy, the vision and revelation of the goal of God's salvation have been made very clear. We all must reach this highest attainment, the goal that is God's reward for His faithful ones. If we are not faithful to God, we shall miss His goal in the coming age and will suffer some punishment to discipline us that we may reach it. To those who will reach the goal in this way it will not be a reward. How we must thank the Lord for His wisdom in making the goal of His salvation a reward. This is a great incentive for us in following the Lord. May we all follow Him to such a degree that we are ushered into God's goal and that His goal will be our reward.

Week 24 – Day 1 (9/17)

2 Cor. 5:6-7 Therefore being always of good courage and knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are abroad from the Lord 7 (For we walk by faith, not by appearance) --

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, 1not being mixed together with faith in those who heard.

MESSAGE FORTY-SEVEN

THE UNIQUE WAY OF FAITH AND FAITH'S DEFINITION

Hebrews, Romans, and Revelation are the three best composed books in the New Testament. Of these three, Hebrews is the best as far as composition is concerned. In the first ten chapters of Hebrews we have a clear, thorough, and complete comparison between God's economy and man's religion. This man-made religion frustrates God's people from going on according to His economy. Due to this frustration, the book of Hebrews was written. After presenting a thorough comparison of Judaism with God's economy, this book charges the Hebrew believers, who were in danger of shrinking back, to live, walk, and go on "by faith" (10:38-39), that is, "not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). Then in chapter eleven it continues to define what faith is in a historical way.

Suppose you are driving an automobile and come to an intersection where there are two signs, one indicating that a road is closed and the other indicating that a road is open. Would you drive on the road that has been closed? If you did, you would run the risk of losing your life. It would be much better to drive on the open way. The clear comparison given in the first ten chapters of Hebrews is a sign for our driving, showing which way has been closed and which way is open. Over the old way is a sign—Closed, Terminated. Over the new way is also a sign—Open, Freshly Slain. This contrast is the consummation of these ten chapters. After presenting such a contrast, the writer tells us how to take this open, freshly slain way—it is by the unique way of faith.

Before considering this matter of faith, I would like to say a further word about the gaining of the soul. Hebrews 10:39 says, "But we are not of them who shrink back to ruin, but of them who have faith to the gaining of the soul." The Bible is the most consistent book. Although it has many aspects and uses different terms, its main point is always consistent. The terms glorification, perfection, and the gaining of the soul all point to one thing. As we have seen, glorification is perfection and perfection is the gaining of the soul. We are Christ's followers today. If we would follow Him according to God's economy, we must pay the price. Humanly speaking, in order to follow the Lord we must lose the soulish enjoyments and worldly entertainments. To lose such things is what it means to lose our soul. If we are unwilling to pay the price to lose our soul today, meaning that we do not like to lose any soulish enjoyments or worldly entertainments in this age, we shall not give any opportunity to the law of life to work Christ into us. To lose our soul today means that we give the law of life the opportunity to work Christ into our being. It means that we do not care for shopping, housing, eating, clothing, or any type of entertainment, and that we only care for the working of the law of life within us. We all must say, "I am willing to pay any price that the law of life might have the opportunity to work Christ into every part of my being." This is what it means to be perfected. This is also for our glorification. Our glorification in the future will be the gaining of our soul. Hence, perfection, glorification, and the gaining of the soul all refer to the same thing.

In 10:39 the writer says that "we are not of them who shrink back to ruin." Because we have been cleansed with the Lord's precious blood, regenerated, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we are good material for God's economy, and the law of life is able to work Christ into us. If we are unwilling to pay the price for this and shrink back, we shall be ruined as the good material for God's economy, as the material in which the law of life can work. If we come forward, we shall remain good material for the law of life to work Christ into our being. Shrinking back ruins the good material by soulish enjoyments, worldly entertainments, and religious activities. The Greek word translated "ruined" is the same word as for destruction. This means that if, as good material for the working of the law of life, you shrink back from

God's economy, you will be completely destroyed as far as being material is concerned. In the past years, I have seen much good material that has been destroyed by shrinking back from God's up-to-date economy. Although they saw God's present economy, they were unwilling to pay the price for it. They shrank back and were ruined. We must be careful about this.

To be ruined means that we save our soul today and lose it in the future. It also means that we sell our birthright of glorification, giving up our right to full perfection. Those who lose their soul in the future are those who do not care for their future perfection, glorification, and gaining of their soul. They only care for their soulish enjoyments today. If we are willing to pay the price to lose our soul today, in the future we shall gain our soul and be perfected and glorified. As an encouragement to the Hebrew believers to go on in this matter, at the end of chapter ten the writer said that we are of them "who have faith to the gaining of the soul." After presenting a thorough comparison of Judaism with God's economy, the writer charges the Hebrew believers to go on by faith. Immediately after this follows chapter eleven, which covers the unique way of faith.

I. THE UNIQUE WAY OF FAITH

A. To Receive the Word of the Gospel by Faith

In this book faith is first mentioned in chapters three and four. In 4:2 we see that faith is the unique way to receive the word of the gospel. The proper gospel is the gospel of bequests. If anyone would receive the gospel of bequests, he must have faith. Suppose someone would offer you a document which said that a large amount of money had been deposited in your bank account. In order to receive this document, you must have faith. If you do not have faith, you will say, "This is just a piece of paper. It doesn't mean anything to me." When we preach the gospel, we must infuse people with faith. The power of the proper gospel preaching is that people are infused with faith to such an extent that they believe whatever we tell them. People must have faith if they are to receive the word of the gospel.

B. To Take God by Faith

Hebrews 6:1 speaks of "faith toward God." Since we cannot see God, we must take Him by faith. Although God is great and wonderful, some people say, "As far as I am concerned, God is nothing." If we have faith, God is everything; if we do not have faith, He is nothing to us. Whenever we minister God to people, we must be able to infuse them with faith; otherwise, whatever we minister to them will be in vain. If people are to grasp God, they must have faith.

C. To Enter into the Rest by Faith

Hebrews 4:3, speaking of the Sabbath rest, says, "We who have believed enter into the rest." The only way to enter into the Sabbath rest is by faith. Anyone who does not believe will be unable to enter into it. For this matter we must exercise our faith.

D. To Inherit the Promise by Faith

Faith is the unique way for us to inherit God's promises (6:12). In the Scriptures God has given us many promises. To inherit these promises we need to be infused by God with faith. Since most of the things promised by God are unseen or hoped for, we need faith to substantiate them.

E. To Hold Fast the Beginning of the Assurance Firm to the End

In order to hold fast the beginning of the assurance (confidence) firm to the end, we must have faith (3:14). The word "assurance" in 3:14 means the practical and actual faith, which we have had from the beginning. We must hold fast this practical and actual faith firm to the end, as we did at the beginning.

Week 24 – Day 2 (9/18)

Heb. 10:22 Let us come forward to the Holy of Holies with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

1 Pet. 1: 9 Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Heb. 3:12, 19 Beware, brothers, lest perhaps there be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from the living God. 19 And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief.

F. To Come Forward to the Holy of Holies and to God's New Covenant Dispensation in Full Assurance of Faith

We must come forward to the Holy of Holies and to God's new covenant dispensation in the full assurance of faith (10:22). In these messages we have said a great deal about God's economy. If we shut our eyes of faith, there will be nothing, and everything we have said will be in vain. But if we exercise our faith, we shall see how much there is in God's economy. If we have no faith, everything is gone. But if we have faith, there is great wealth before us. In these messages we have seen the vision of the law of life. We must go on with this vision, not with the knowledge of religion.

G. To Hold Fast the Confession of Our Hope without Wavering

Our hope is Christ. His indestructible life, which has been imparted into us with its functioning law of life, and His kingly and divine priesthood, in which He ministers all the riches of God into us, are also our hope. This must be our confession. We need to exercise our faith to hold fast this confession of our hope without wavering. Only by faith can we realize the confession of our hope in Christ.

H. To Live by Faith in Suffering for the Promise of Reward

To take God's new covenant way and to follow the Lord in this way causes us a lot of suffering in material things. For this, God has promised us a great reward (v. 35) that on earth today we may live by faith and not by sight. The life that follows the Lord in God's economy is a life of faith.

I. To Gain the Soul by Faith

To gain our soul in the coming age of the kingdom requires that we have faith (10:39; 1 Pet. 1:9). If we would not care for today's enjoyments but for the coming day, we must have faith. Furthermore, if we would be sure that we shall have something better in the future and that it is worthwhile to sacrifice the enjoyments and entertainments of today in order to have it, we must have faith. As we shall see, faith is the conviction of things not seen. Since we cannot see into the future, how do we know that a glorious tomorrow is ahead of us? We know it by faith. Deep within me, I am fully convinced that a glorious tomorrow is awaiting me. This conviction comes by faith.

J. The Warning concerning an Evil Heart of Unbelief

In 3:12 and 19 we are warned about having an evil heart of unbelief. In the eyes of God, no one is as evil as the one who will not believe in Him. The unbelieving heart is the most evil heart. Nothing insults God more than our unbelief, and nothing honors Him more than our believing in Him. We must believe whatever God says in His word. If our heart does not believe God's word, it is in His eyes an evil, unbelieving heart.

II. FAITH'S DEFINITION

A. Faith as the Substantiating of Things Hoped For

Now we come to the matter of faith's definition. Although faith is realized within our being, it is difficult to define. Faith is just faith. But the writer of Hebrews, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said, "Faith is the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (11:1). Since faith is the substantiating of things hoped for, it is the assurance, confidence, confirmation, reality, essence, supporting ground of things hoped for, the foundation that supports the things hoped for. The Greek word

translated “substantiating” here is the same word rendered “substance” in 1:3, “assurance” in 3:14, and “confidence” (which knows it rests on a sure foundation) in 2 Corinthians 11:17 (KJV). It may also be translated confirmation, reality, essence (which means the real nature of things as opposed to appearance), foundation, or supporting ground. The King James Version uses “substance” instead of “substantiating” in this verse. But the meaning here is not of solid matter. The Greek word denotes an action and should be rendered as a gerund, a verbal noun. The paper on which this message is printed is a substance. But by touching it with your hand you substantiate it. You sense, realize, and have a full consciousness of it. This is an act of substantiating. Faith is not a substance; it is a substantiating action. To have faith is not to have a substantial element; it is to have a substantiating ability. Although certain things cannot be seen, heard, or touched, we nevertheless have within us the ability to substantiate them. This is faith. The Bible says that whoever believes shall have eternal life (John 3:15). When we hear this word, we sense that it conveys something real, although no one can see or touch it. Nevertheless, the faith within us substantiates what is conveyed in this word.

The Bible is a will filled with bequests. An unbeliever, however, would say that this is nonsense. To him, the Bible is simply a book which is difficult to understand. But for us, God’s called ones, the Bible is a book of bequests. When we hear this, something within us responds to substantiate it. This substantiating is what we call faith. How do you know that you have eternal life? How do you know that the Lord Jesus is in your spirit? We know these things by faith. We can neither explain nor show people that Christ dwells in our spirit. Although we cannot present this to others, we can substantiate it for ourselves.

This substantiating is not a small thing; it is like a sixth sense. Each of our five senses has a substantiating ability. For instance, our nose substantiates fragrances and our eyes substantiate colors. Faith is a specific and particular sense in addition to our five senses. It is the sense by which we substantiate the things unseen or hoped for.

1. The Believer’s Life Being a Life of Things Hoped For

The believer’s life is a life of things hoped for, a life of hope which goes together and abides with faith (1 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 13:13; Rom. 4:18). The unbelievers, being without Christ, have no hope (Eph. 2:12; 1 Thes. 4:13). But we, the believers in Christ, are a people of hope. The calling which we received from God brings us hope (Eph. 1:18; 4:4). We are regenerated to “a living hope” (1 Pet. 1:3, Gk.). Our Christ, who is in us, is “the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27; 1 Tim. 1:1), which will issue in the redemption, the transfiguration of our body in glory (Rom. 8:23-25). This is “the hope of salvation” (1 Thes. 5:8), a “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13), a “good hope” (2 Thes. 2:16), “the hope of eternal life” (Titus 1:2; 3:7), which is the “hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2), “the hope of the gospel” (Col. 1:23), “the hope which is laid up for us in heaven” (Col. 1:5). We should always keep “this hope” (1 John 3:3), and “boast in it” (Rom. 5:2). Our God is “the God of hope” (Rom. 15:13), and “through the encouragement of the Scriptures we may have hope” (Rom. 15:4) all the time “in God” (1 Pet. 1:21) and “rejoice in it” (Rom. 12:12). This book of Hebrews charges us to “hold fast the boast of hope firm to the end” (3:6), “show diligence unto the full assurance of hope to the end” (6:11), and “lay hold of the hope set before us” (6:18). It also tells us that the new covenant brings in “a better hope, through which we draw near to God” (7:19). Our life should be a life of hope, which goes together and abides with faith (1 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 13:13). We should follow Abraham “who beyond hope believed in hope” (Rom. 4:18, Recovery Version).

2. Faith Substantiating the Things Which We Are Hoping For

All the things which we are hoping for are substantiated by our faith. With faith, they all are real; without faith, they seem vain. We need to contact God for His infusion of faith that we may substantiate all the things which He has promised as our hope.

Week 24 – Day 3 (9/19)

Rom. 8:24-25 For we were saved in hope. But a hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly await it through endurance.

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.

B. Faith as the Conviction of Things Not Seen

Verse 1 also says that faith is the “conviction of things not seen.” The Greek word rendered “conviction” may also be translated “evidence” or “proof.” The word conviction implies action. Thus, faith is not the substance, but the conviction, action, evidence, and proof of things not seen. All things hoped for are things not seen (Rom. 8:24-25). If anything is seen, we do not need to hope for it. As people of hope, we should not aim our life at “the things which are seen,” but at “the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18). Hence, “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). We are aiming at the Holy of Holies and the New Jerusalem, neither of which can be seen by us. Nevertheless, we have the full conviction of these unseen things. 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.

Faith, which is the way to realize and enjoy the things of God, is not a part of our natural being. It is a divine ability which has been infused into us. The proper faith is the divine element, even God Himself, infused into our being as the ability to substantiate the things which we do not see. This infused element is our substantiating ability. Whenever we contact God or listen to His word, the substantiating ability which has been infused into our being by God Himself spontaneously begins to realize the things of God, the things hoped for, and the things not seen, and we simply believe. As we have seen, faith is a special sense in addition to the five senses derived from our natural birth. This sense substantiates the things of God, things which we do not see. Since the Christian life is a life of hope and in this life we aim at things unseen, we need more of the transfusion and infusion of God that we may have the ability, the faith, to substantiate the things hoped for and to have the conviction of things unseen.

MESSAGE FORTY-EIGHT

THE HISTORY OF FAITH AND ITS WITNESSES

Hebrews 11 is a chapter on faith with its history. From verses 3 through 40 it presents a brief history of faith—from God’s creation, through all the generations of God’s chosen people, to all the New Testament believers, consummating with the New Jerusalem in eternity—to prove that faith is the unique pathway for God’s seekers to receive His promise and take His way. As He inspired the writing of this chapter, the Holy Spirit certainly had such a view. Everyone involved in this history of faith was a witness. Hence, Hebrews 11 is not only a chapter on faith with its history, but also with its witnesses. The word “witness” here refers to the person testifying, not to the testimony. In Greek, the word for witness is the same as the word for martyr. Every witness is a martyr, suffering martyrdom for the testimony of faith. In this chapter we read of many martyrs (vv. 32-39). Some were stoned and others were sawn in two. In this message, we shall consider the history of faith, especially concentrating on the consummation of this history, which is very much related to us.

I. IN UNDERSTANDING THE FRAMING OF THE UNIVERSE BY THE WORD OF GOD

Verse 3 says, “By faith we understand that the universe has been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen has not come into being from things which appear.” Scholars have spent a great deal of time in attempting to learn how the universe was framed. All their propositions regarding this are nonsense. The universe was framed by the word of God. God spoke and it came into being. We do not know this by our five senses; we know it by faith, by our substantiating sense.

II. IN ABEL, OFFERING A MORE EXCELLENT SACRIFICE

Verse 4 says, “By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained testimony that he was righteous, God testifying to his gifts, and through it, he having died still speaks.” According to typology, Abel’s more excellent sacrifice was a type of Christ who is the real “better sacrifices” (9:23). In our reading of Hebrews, we can see that only Christ Himself is the more excellent sacrifice. By faith, Abel offered the type of such a sacrifice.

III. IN ENOCH, BEING TRANSLATED FROM SEEING DEATH

Verse 5 says, “By faith Enoch was translated so that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him. For before his translation he obtained the testimony that he was well-pleasing to God.” Enoch was not only translated from death but from the seeing of death.

III. IN NOAH, PREPARING AN ARK FOR SALVATION

Verse 7 says, “By faith Noah, having been warned concerning things not yet seen, being devout, prepared an ark for the salvation of his house, through which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” Consider Noah’s situation: as he was building an ark for a flood that was to come, no one believed him. The sky was clear and no one expected a flood to come. Nevertheless, substantiating the coming flood by faith, Noah built the ark.

V. IN ABRAHAM

Abraham has been called the father of faith. By faith he obeyed God’s calling to leave his homeland, dwelling as a foreigner in the land of promise (vv. 8-9). Abraham obeyed God and went out of Chaldea “without knowing where he was going.” This afforded him constant opportunity to exercise his faith to trust in God for His instant leading, taking God’s presence as his map. Verse 10 says that by faith Abraham “waited for the city which has the foundations, whose Architect and Maker is God.” This is “the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem” (12:22), “the Jerusalem above” (Gal. 4:26, Gk.), “the holy city, the New Jerusalem” (Rev. 21:2; 3:12) which God has prepared for His people (v. 16), and “the tabernacle of God” in which God will dwell with men for eternity (Rev. 21:3). As the patriarchs waited for this city, so we also seek it (13:14).

Abraham also acted by faith in offering up Isaac, “counting that God was able to raise him even from among the dead, from whence he also received him back in a figure” (vv. 17-19). Verse 12, referring to Abraham, says, “Wherefore also there was born of one, and that of one become dead, even as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the sand by the seashore innumerable.” The stars of heaven signify Abraham’s heavenly descendants, the descendants of faith (Gal. 3:7, 19); whereas “the sand by the seashore” signifies his earthly descendants, the descendants in the flesh.

Verse 13, speaking of Abraham and the other patriarchs, says, “All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them from afar and greeted them, and confessed that they were strangers and sojourners on the earth.” The Greek word translated “sojourners” may also be rendered “pilgrims,” “exiles,” “expatriates.” Abraham was the first Hebrew (Gen. 14:13), a river crosser, leaving Chaldea, the idolatrous land of curse, crossing the flood, the river of Perath or Euphrates (Josh. 24:2-3), and coming to Canaan, the good land of blessings. Yet he did not settle here; rather, he sojourned in the land of promise as a pilgrim, even as an exile and an expatriate, longing after a better country, a heavenly one (v. 16), seeking a country of his own (v. 14). This might imply that he was ready to cross another river from the earthly side to the heavenly side. Isaac and Jacob followed him in the same steps, living on the earth as strangers and sojourners and waiting for the God-built city of foundations (v. 10). In the word of verses 9 through 16, it may imply that the writer of this book intended to impress the believing Hebrews with the fact that they, as the real Hebrews, should follow their forefathers, considering themselves also as strangers and sojourners on the earth and looking forward to the heavenly country, which is better than the earthly one.

Week 24 – Day 4 (9/20)

Heb. 11:11 By faith also Sarah herself received power to conceive seed, even beyond the season of age, since she considered Him faithful who promised.

20-24 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even concerning things to come. 21 By faith Jacob, while he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshipped God, while leaning on the top of his staff. 22 By faith Joseph, nearing his end, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel and gave orders concerning his bones. 23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents because they saw that the child was lovely, and they did not fear the king's decree. 24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

VI. IN SARAH, CONCEIVING SEED

Verse 11 says, “By faith also Sarah herself received power to conceive seed, even beyond the season of age, since she considered Him faithful Who promised.” Sarah had become an old woman whose function had ceased; yet in the midst of her situation, she believed in God’s word.

VII. IN ISAAC, BLESSING JACOB AND ESAU

Verse 20 says, “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even concerning things to come.” If you read Isaac’s history, you will see that he was not a smart man; he was quite common, and there was nothing special about him. Nevertheless, he did something marvelous—he blessed his two sons, Jacob and Esau. Although Isaac blessed them blindly, he did it in faith.

VIII. IN JACOB

Verse 21 says, “By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph.” When Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph, he not only did it by faith but with very clear sight. His inner sight was exceedingly clear. When Joseph attempted to change his hands, being displeased that Jacob’s right hand was upon Ephraim instead of upon Manasseh, the firstborn, Jacob refused and said, “I know it, my son, I know it” (Gen. 48:15-19). Jacob knew what he was doing and blessed Joseph’s sons by faith.

Verse 21 also says that Jacob “worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff.” This is very meaningful, signifying that Jacob confessed that he was a sojourner, a traveler on the earth (v. 13). When we are settled, we no longer need to keep a staff in our hand, for that is a sign of a sojourner, not of a dweller. Jacob’s staff also signified that God was his shepherd, having shepherded him all his life long (Gen. 48:15, Heb.). This is the reason that his worshipping, leaning on the top of his staff, is recorded here as a matter of faith.

IX. IN JOSEPH

Verse 22 says, “By faith Joseph, when near his end, remembered concerning the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.” Joseph remembered the coming exodus of the sons of Israel and charged them to bring his bones out of Egypt and into Canaan. This took great faith. When the Israelites entered into Canaan, they brought Joseph’s bones into the good land (Exo. 13:19).

X. IN MOSES

Verse 23 says, “By faith Moses, having been born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw that he was a handsome child, and they did not fear the king’s decree.” His parents hid him by faith. When he had “become great,” he “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to be ill-treated with the people of God than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin” (vv. 24-25). The Greek word translated “temporary” in verse 25 may also be rendered “for awhile,” “short-lived,” “fleeting,” “passing.” During Moses’ time, to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter was an enjoyment to the life of the soul. But Moses refused this, choosing rather to be ill-treated with the people of God than to have the fleeting enjoyment of sin. The enjoyment in Egypt, that is, the enjoyment in the world, is sinful in the eyes of God. It is the enjoyment of sin, of a sinful life, and is temporary, short-lived, fleeting, and passing.

In verse 26 we are told that Moses esteemed “the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked away to the reward.” When I was young, being troubled by my clock mentality, I questioned how Moses could have suffered the reproach of Christ, since Christ had not yet come. Christ, as

“the Angel of the Lord,” was always with the children of Israel in their afflictions (Exo. 3:2, 7-9; 14:19; Num. 20:16; Isa. 63:9). Furthermore, the Scripture identifies Him with them (Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:15). Hence, the reproach falling on them was considered also as His reproach, and the reproaches of those who reproached God fell upon Him too (Rom. 15:3). The New Testament believers, as His followers, bear His reproach (13:13) and are reproached for His name (1 Pet. 4:14). Moses, choosing to be ill-treated with the people of God (v. 25), esteemed this kind of reproach, the reproach of the Christ of God, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt in Pharaoh’s palace, for he looked away to the reward.

Because Moses was willing to suffer the reproach of the Christ, he will receive the reward of the kingdom. He was not allowed to enter into the rest of the good land because of his failure at Meribah (Num. 20:12-13; Deut. 3:26, 27; 32:50-52), but he will be with Christ in the kingdom (Matt. 16:28-17:3). By referring to this, the writer certainly intended to encourage the Hebrew believers, who were suffering persecution for Christ’s sake, to follow Moses by esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the things they had lost and by looking away to the reward. We do not know who told Moses of the reward. Perhaps it was his parents. Nevertheless, having great faith, he looked away to the reward and fled Egypt. The palace of Pharaoh, the royal sonship, the worldly enjoyment and attainment, and all the things in Egypt were there before him. According to his sight, these things were real, but according to his faith, they were not real. Something other than that—the reward—was real to his substantiating sense. Although at that time the reward was far away from him, he looked unto it and was encouraged by it to forsake everything in Egypt.

Verse 27 says that by faith Moses “left Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king, for he was steadfast as seeing the invisible One.” At that time, this was a great thing. That great reward was such an incentive to him in fleeing Egypt. This is a full portrait of our life today. Today the world is Egypt and all that it can afford us is a palace. But to our faith, all this is a vanity of vanities. Only one thing is the reality of realities—the coming reward.

Verse 28 says, “By faith he instituted the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, that the destroyer of the firstborn should not touch them.” It took faith for Moses to institute the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood. It also took faith for Moses to tell the people to prepare the lamb and to sprinkle the blood on the lintels and posts of the doors. God honored Moses’ faith in instituting the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood. Without seeing the Passover, which was to come, Moses substantiated it by faith and acted according to this substantiation.

XI. IN THE SONS OF ISRAEL

Verse 29 says that by faith the sons of Israel “passed through the Red Sea as through dry land, which the Egyptians attempting to do were swallowed up.” Nothing is mentioned in this chapter of the forty years during which the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, since during that time they did nothing by faith; rather, in those years they provoked God by their unbelief (3:16-18). Even their crossing of the Jordan River is not accounted here, because that crossing was due to the delay caused by their unbelief. It would not have been needed if they had not had the unbelief which disabled them from entering the good land at Kadesh-barnea (Deut. 1:19-46), just a short time after they left Mount Sinai (Deut. 1:2). If they had had faith at Kadesh-barnea, they could have entered the good land thirty-eight years earlier than they did. Although they eventually crossed the Jordan River by faith, the Holy Spirit here made no record of it because it was not pleasing in the eyes of God.

Verse 30, passing over the years of wandering in the wilderness, says, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell, having been encircled during seven days.” The Israelites did not have the best weapons when they encircled the walls of Jericho. They did this by faith, doing what God had told them to do, and He honored their faith.

XII. IN RAHAB, HAVING RECEIVED THE SPIES AND NOT PERISHING

“By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with the obstinate, having received the spies with peace” (v. 31). When I was young, I liked to use this story in the preaching of the gospel. Rahab let down a scarlet cord which signifies the flowing blood of Jesus (Josh. 2:18; 6:23). By faith, she was saved from the destruction which the Canaanites suffered.

Week 24 – Day 5 (9/21)

Matt. 27:40 And saying, You who destroy the temple and build it up in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross!

42 He saved others; Himself He cannot save. He is King of Israel; let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe on Him.

XIII. IN GIDEON, BARAK, SAMSON, JEPHTHAH, DAVID, SAMUEL, AND THE PROPHETS, DOING MANY MARVELOUS THINGS

By faith Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets did many marvelous things (vv. 32-39). Although they did marvelous things, many of them also suffered martyrdom. God performed miracles for some of them, but He did not do such things for all of them. Do not think that if you have faith God will always do something for you. Many times the exercise of our faith will only bring us the enjoyment of God's silence. Perhaps when some are being stoned to death, they would pray, "O Lord, save me from these stones." Instead, the Lord may give them a peaceful silence, not doing anything to rescue them. When Stephen was being martyred, the Lord did not rescue him but gave him such a sweet silence (Acts 7:54-60). To suffer persecution without any rescue coming from the Lord requires great faith.

God's silence is greater than His miracles. Which do you prefer to have—God's miracles or His silence? If we would be honest, most of us would say that we prefer God's miracles. When the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, the mockers said to Him, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross," and, "If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him" (Matt. 27:40, 42). For at least three of the six hours while the Lord was on the cross, there was silence in the universe. It seemed that there was no God, and the mockers and the blasphemers said whatever they wanted. It was their world and they were the gods at that time. God will remain silent much more often than He will perform miracles. At times, we all must enjoy God's silence by faith.

Many martyrs have testified that they enjoyed God's silence by faith. I can never forget that in the 1930's two missionaries were martyred in China. On the day of their martyrdom, one of them said, "Every martyr's face is like the face of an angel." The other said, "If I had another life to live, I would also give it to be martyred for the Lord." God allowed them to be martyred there in China, doing nothing to rescue them. They enjoyed God's silence by faith. As we read the history of faith recorded in this chapter, we see that it is not just a record of miracles, but also a record of God's silence. He did not always act to help His saints outwardly, but often enabled them to enjoy His silence inwardly.

Verse 35 says, "Others were beaten to death, not accepting deliverance, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection." The better resurrection is not only "the first resurrection" (Rev. 20:4-6), "the resurrection of life" (John 5:28-29), but also "the out-resurrection" (Phil. 3:11, Gk.), the extra-resurrection, the resurrection in which the Lord's overcomers will receive the reward (v. 26) of the kingdom, after which the Apostle Paul sought. Verse 38, speaking of those who endured such affliction by faith, says that the world was not worthy of them. These faith people are an extra-people, of the highest estate, of whom the corrupted world is not worthy. Only the holy city of God, New Jerusalem, is worthy of having them.

XIV. TO BE PERFECTED BY THE BELIEVERS OF THE NEW COVENANT

A. The Two Dispensations of God's Economy

Verse 40 says, "God having in view something better concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." This verse implies a great deal. None of the witnesses of faith was ever perfected. They all need to be perfected by the believers of the new covenant. In God's economy there are two dispensations: the dispensation of the old covenant of shadows and the dispensation of the new covenant of realities. All the martyrs and witnesses of faith were under the old covenant of shadows; they were not in the reality. Since the new covenant dispensation of reality in which we are is better than the old covenant

dispensation of shadows in which the witnesses of faith were, they need us for their perfection.

Verse 40 speaks of “something better concerning us.” The Greek word translated “better” means stronger, more powerful, nobler, and greater; hence, it means better. It is used thirteen times in Hebrews: the better Christ (1:4), a better hope (7:19), a better covenant (7:22; 8:6), better promises (8:6), better sacrifices (9:23), a better possession (10:34), a better country (11:16), a better resurrection (11:35), something better (11:40), and better speaking (12:24). (The other two times are in 6:9 and 7:7, where it is translated greater.) All these better things are the fulfillment and reality of the things which the Old Testament saints had in types, figures, and shadows. What God had in view at that time was the things to come in the new covenant concerning us, which are the true and real things, better, stronger, more powerful, nobler, and greater than their types, figures, and shadows. The Old Testament saints, who had only the shadows, need us for their perfection that they may share with us in the real things of the new covenant. Thus, why should the Hebrew believers leave the real things of the new covenant and return to the shadows of the old covenant?

Verse 40 says that “apart from us they should not be made perfect.” Both the participation in the kingdom for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4, 6) and the sharing in the New Jerusalem for eternity (Rev. 21:2-3; 22:1-5) are a corporate matter. The kingdom feast will be for both the Old Testament and the New Testament overcomers (Matt. 8:11). The blessed New Jerusalem will be composed of both the Old Testament saints and the New Testament believers (Rev. 21:12-14). Hence, apart from the New Testament believers, the Old Testament ones cannot obtain what God has promised. For the obtaining and enjoying of the good things of God’s promise, they need the New Testament believers to perfect them. Now they are waiting for us to go on that they may be perfected.

**B. The Saints in the Shadows of
the Old Covenant Expecting to
See the Realities of the New Covenant**

The saints in the shadows of the old covenant expected to see the realities of the new covenant (Matt. 13:16-17; John 8:56; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). In the past, many of us thought that it would have been wonderful to live during the time of the Old Testament. We were taught that Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Elijah, and the other Old Testament saints were outstanding persons and that it would have been better for us to live in their age than in the present age. When I was young, I wished I could have lived during the Old Testament days. This concept, however, is in darkness. We are living in a better age and we have heard, experienced, and participated in better things than the things in the old covenant age. The saints in the shadows of the old covenant wanted to see the realities of the age in which we are living. Matthew 13:17 says, “Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear and have not heard them.” Even Abraham was expecting to see the reality of the new covenant (John 8:56). Furthermore, the prophets preached of the grace that has come to us. What they ministered was not for themselves but for us (1 Pet. 1:10-12). All the Old Testament saints, including David and Solomon, were not for themselves but for us. Everything they had was a shadow of the reality which we enjoy today.

**C. The Believers in the Realities
of the New Covenant Being Greater Than
the Saints in the Shadows of the Old Covenant**

The believers in the realities of the new covenant are greater than the saints in the shadows of the old covenant. Matthew 11:11, a great verse, proves this. “Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” John the Baptist was greater than all who had preceded him, including Abraham, David, and Solomon. Nevertheless, he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John. Since John the Baptist was greater than Abraham and we are greater than John, then we also are greater than Abraham. All the saints in the Old Testament age looked forward to the realities of the New

Week 24 – Day 5 (9/21) (Cont'd)

Testament age, but none of them saw anything of this reality. Between these two ages there was a transitory period lasting approximately three and a half years. During this transitory period, John the Baptist came and saw the Christ, whom all the saints in the Old Testament time had been waiting for. Because John saw Him, he was greater than all of them. Although John saw Christ, he did not get into Christ. But we, the New Testament believers, are in Christ. Abraham expected to see Christ, John the Baptist saw Christ, but we are in Christ. Therefore, since we are so much closer to Christ, we are greater than Abraham and John the Baptist. We are not only close to Christ—we are in Christ and Christ is in us. We can even say along with the Apostle Paul, “For to me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). We are greater than Abraham, David, Solomon, and all the Old Testament saints, for they were in the shadows. We are not only in the reality—we are the reality. Because of this, the Old Testament saints cannot be perfected without us. Without us, they could never enter into the enjoyment of the realities which they were looking for.

If we exercise our substantiating faith, we shall sense that Abraham, David, Solomon, and all the overcoming saints who have preceded us are watching over us like spectators at a football game. They are cheering us on and encouraging us to win the game. Their enjoyment of the reality depends upon us. This is the correct meaning of verse 40, which says that “apart from us they should not be made perfect.” As verse 39 indicates, the Old Testament saints did not obtain the promise because God had in view “something better concerning us.” They all are waiting for us. Even the Apostle Paul and all the New Testament martyrs are waiting for us. They, the foregoing overcomers, are waiting for the fullness of the overcomers. The number of overcomers has not yet been fulfilled. One day the fullness of that number will be reached. Thus, verse 40 was a very strong encouragement to all the staggering Hebrew believers to come forward and to fill up the gap in the number of overcomers.

In His economy, God does not intend to have an individual expression. He desires to have a corporate expression. This expression requires a complete number of overcomers. Only God knows what this number is. As long as it has not been reached, the time cannot come, and the foregoing overcomers will still need to wait for us. What a responsibility we have! They are ready, but we are not. We are truly in the last days. Not only are we greater than John the Baptist, but we are even somewhat greater than all the martyrs in the first few centuries, because we are more important than they were. We can experience more than they did because they were at the beginning and we are here at the consummation. The consummation is always richer, greater, and higher than the beginning. It is not a small thing that we are in the Lord’s recovery today. We are living in the consummating period of God’s economy, and so many foregoing overcomers are expecting to see our completion. We are surely the most blessed people in the universe, for we have the golden opportunity to share in the fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose.

XV. A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Hebrews 12:1 says, “Therefore let us also, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, putting off every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, run with endurance the race which is set before us.” The cloud is for leading people in following the Lord (Num. 9:15-22), and the Lord is in the cloud to be with the people (Exo. 13:21-22). The children of Israel followed the Lord by the pillar and enjoyed the Lord’s presence in the pillar of cloud. All the witnesses of faith, even the martyrs of faith, are a cloud. By this cloud of witnesses we follow the Lord and enjoy His presence.

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.
Exo. 13:21-22 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. 22 Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night departed from before the people.

MESSAGE FORTY-NINE

THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF FAITH

**I. THE SAINTS OF THE OLD COVENANT
ONLY BEING WITNESSES OF FAITH**

In this message we come to the Author and Perfecter of faith (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.

**II. ONLY JESUS BEING THE AUTHOR
AND PERFECTER OF FAITH**

A. 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.

Week 25 – Day 1 (9/24) (Cont’d)

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.

B. 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.

Eph. 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves; it is the gift of God;
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:

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 of the Son of God, who loved me and
gave Himself up for me.

III. THE TRANSFUSION OF FAITH

A. 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.

B. 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.

C. 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

Week 25 – Day 2 (9/25) (Cont'd)

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 firstfruit of the working of the law of life in our being.

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.

3:14 If anyone's work which he has built upon the foundation remains, he will receive a reward;

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the way and the reality and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.

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.

MESSAGE FIFTY

RUN THE RACE

I. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE BEING A RACE

In this message we come to the Christian race. The Christian life is a race. Every saved Christian must run the race to win the prize (1 Cor. 9:24). This prize is not salvation in a 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, who has run the race and won the prize, was nearly the only one who likened the Christian life to a race. In the book of Hebrews he charged the Hebrew believers to run the race, saying, "run with endurance the race which is set before us" (12:1).

Now we must ask a very puzzling question: what is this race? We should not say that the race is perfection or glorification, for that is the goal of the race. Neither is the race the inward working of the law of life, for that is the process of the race. The race is not even the losing of the soul, because that is the way

Week 25 – Day 3 (9/26) (Cont'd)

to run the race; it is not the race itself. In order to answer this question, we need to consider the Lord's word in John 14:6: "I am the way." A race is a way, a course. Because Christ is the way, He is also the race. The race we are running is Christ. Our way is our race. These are not two things, one the way and the other the race. No, the way we are walking is the race we are running. Therefore, Christ, who is the way, is the race. Although I have been ministering on this matter of running the race for over forty years, I have never been so clear as I am now that the race is Christ Himself.

I am burdened that we all might be clear about God's way. In the universe God has prepared the unique way which we must take. This way has no beginning or ending; it is endless, reaching from eternity to eternity. From Genesis 1 through Revelation 22 there is only one way—Christ. Before Christ was manifested, God used types to signify this matter of Christ as God's way, the most striking of which was the tabernacle. As we have seen, the tabernacle has three parts: the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. In these three parts of the tabernacle there is a way, starting from the altar; passing through the laver, the showbread table, the lampstand, and the incense altar; and ushering us into the ark, the place where the law of life is. The way in the tabernacle is a picture of Christ as our unique way. As we shall see, there is a reason why this way is called a race.

Genesis 1 and 2 reveal that God's intention was that man, who was created in His image, would be on His way. According to 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15, the image of God is Christ. Thus, for man to be created in the image of God meant that he was made according to Christ. He was created according to Christ that he might be on God's way, which is Christ. In Genesis 2 man was put in front of the tree of life, which signified Christ as our life. Therefore, man was not only made according to Christ, but also was destined to take in Christ as his life. If man had done this, he would immediately have been on God's way. However, soon after the creation of man and before man was on God's unique way, Satan came in to distract man from God's way to something other than Christ. But, in His mercy, God came in to establish the way of redemption that the distracted man might be brought back to God's way. Abel followed this, but Cain did not. Although Abel was brought back to God's way, Cain was distracted by a further step of Satan, never returning to God's original way. Later, God commanded the children of Israel to erect the tabernacle. With the tabernacle there was a clear way by which sinners could enter into the reality of what God is. When the children of Israel were called by God, they all were sinners distracted from the way of God. But God showed them the tabernacle, in which there was a way to go from the altar in the outer court to the consummate point in the Holy of Holies—the enjoyment of God's element, the law of life. Everything on this way indicates an aspect of Christ. Hence, the way for man to reach God is just Christ Himself.

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,

However, Judaism, the Jewish religion, misused the tabernacle and everything revealed in the Old Testament to make a religion. The very religion which was constituted according to God's holy word eventually distracted God's people from God's way. Both the tabernacle and the temple were constructed for the purpose of showing God's people the way by which they might reach God and enter into Him. When the Lord Jesus came, the priests were worshipping God in the temple, offering sacrifices on the altar, dressing the lamp, displaying the showbread, and burning the incense. They did all this for the purpose of contacting God. But the Lord Jesus went to the house of Simon the leper in Bethany, where He enjoyed fellowship with those brothers and sisters. While the priests were worshipping God in the temple, God was in Simon's house in Bethany. The way was not in the temple; the way—Christ—was in that house in Bethany. Even the worship and service which had been ordained by God to show the way to reach God was utilized by Satan to distract people from Christ, God's unique way.

Consider the example of Saul of Tarsus, who was absolutely for the Jewish religion. When he realized that some of his countrymen, such as Peter, John, and Stephen, were not in this religion, he was stirred up to oppose them. By that time, the way had become a race, and Peter, John, Stephen, and all the other believers were running in it. As Saul of Tarsus was running alongside of this way, attempting to hinder those on the way, the Lord Jesus appeared to him, striking him down and turning him to this way (Acts 9:1-6). I believe that once Saul was in Christ and was walking on this way, he considered his religious background and all the distractions along the way, thinking that he had been born a Hebrew and circumcised on the eighth day and wondering whether he should give it all up. Eventually he realized that he had to forget about being a Hebrew and not only walk on the way but run the race. Whenever you drive a car fast, you are not looking for an exit. But once you slow down, it means that you are seeking an exit. Saul began to speed up, and his name was changed to Paul. By running, the way was changed into a race.

As a saint in the Lord's recovery, are you walking the way or running the race? If we are walking the way, one day we shall walk out. If we are walking gently and slowly, we shall be distracted by some other way. But if we run the race, taking no time to look around and keeping our eyes fixed on the goal, we shall not be distracted. Paul had the greatest incentive for pressing on and for running the race; he no longer had the time to look around or to consider anything else. Although Paul might never have staggered, as a typical Hebrew believer, he must have considered his background. I believe that after he was knocked down by the Lord on the road to Damascus, he recalled his life in the Jewish religion. Perhaps he said, "I had so many good things. Is the temple false and is the priesthood wrong? Were they not ordained by God?" If he had never considered his religious background, he could not have written Galatians 1, Philippians 3, and the whole book of Hebrews so clearly. If he had not been a typical Hebrew believer experiencing all these things, he could not have helped the staggering Hebrew Christians. But he had been in the same situation and had suffered from the same disease, being an experienced patient. There is a proverb which says that an experienced patient becomes a good doctor. As we shall see, Paul was a doctor and could heal those who were in danger of being crippled. He himself had once been in the same danger, but he had been healed. As a result, he knew the cure for the staggering Hebrew Christians and was able to give them the right medicine. In the book of Hebrews, Paul gave the best medication to the crippled ones that they might be brought back to running the race.

God's intention is to put us into Christ and to work Christ into our being, making Christ our standard and all of us a reproduction of the standard. As we have seen, this will result in our perfection and glorification. When the book of Hebrews was written, many of the Hebrew believers were considering their background and were walking on the way or even standing still. They were in danger of being distracted by the temple, the priesthood, and the offerings. They were in danger of either being stranded or of shrinking back to Judaism and not coming forward to the Holy of Holies. This means that they were in

Week 25 – Day 4 (9/27) (Cont'd)

danger of turning from God's goal to something used by the enemy to distract God's people from His way. Thus, after eleven chapters in which he presented the Hebrew believers a clear view of the way, the writer seemed to say, "Let us run the race. Don't stand still, look back, or look around. Don't even walk—run." We should not only refuse to leave Christ and go back to Judaism; we should not even stand still in Christ. Even walking in Christ is inadequate. We must run the race. Do not take the time to consider or look around, to stand still or walk slowly. You must run the race. By now we should be clear what the race is—it is Christ Himself as our way. But we should not take this way as a way; we must take it as a race to run.

In chapter six Paul told us to flee. We must flee everything into the Holy of Holies where our Forerunner, Jesus Christ, has entered within the veil. This is what it means to run the race.

II. ALL THE BELIEVERS OF THE NEW COVENANT MUST RUN THIS RACE

A. By Putting Off Every Encumbrance, Weight, Burden, and Impediment

Hebrews 12:1 says, "Therefore let us also, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, putting off every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, run with endurance the race which is set before us." The Greek word translated "encumbrance" may also be rendered "weight," "burden," "impediment." The runners in a race must strip off every unnecessary weight, every encumbering burden, that they might have no impediment to winning the race. Notice that here Paul says "us," not "you," including himself in this matter.

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,

Rom. 8: 10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.

2 Tim. 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

B. By Putting Off the Entangling Sin

Verse 1 mentions “the sin which so easily entangles us.” Sin here refers mainly to the thing which entangles us from running the race, just as the willful sin mentioned in 10:26 would keep the Hebrew believers away from the new covenant way in God’s economy. Both the encumbering weight and the entangling sin would frustrate the Hebrew believers and restrain them from running the heavenly race in the new covenant way of following the Jesus who was rejected by Judaism. To the staggering Hebrew believers, the thought of shrinking back and returning to Judaism was an entangling sin. The sin mentioned in this verse is particular and unique, for Paul uses the definite article, saying, “the sin.” This unique, entangling sin was the willful sin of forsaking the assembling together with the saints, of giving up the new covenant way, and of going back to Judaism.

C. With Endurance

There is much opposition to this race. Thus, we must run it with endurance (12:1). This means that in order to run the race of Christ, we must suffer the opposition with endurance, never growing weary or fainting in our souls.

D. By Looking Away from All Things

In verse 2 Paul told the Hebrew believers to look away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfector of faith. The Greek word translated “looking away unto” means to look with undivided attention by turning away from every other object. The runners in a race, such as the hundred yard dash, turn away from everything else and look at the goal with undivided attention. In this verse Paul seemed to be saying, “Hebrew brothers, do not stand there considering and looking around. You must turn away from everything other than Christ and look to Him with undivided attention. This is the way to run the race.” The Hebrew believers had to look away from all the things of their situation, away from their old religion and its persecution, and away from all earthly things that they might look unto Jesus who is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God in the heavens.

E. By Looking unto Jesus Who Is Now Seated at the Right Hand of the Throne of God in the Heavens

Paul told the Hebrew believers to look “away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfector of faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” From 1:3, this book points us continually to the Christ seated in heaven. In all his other epistles, Paul mainly presents to us the Christ who dwells in our spirit (Rom. 8:10; 2 Tim. 4:22) as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45, ASV) to be our life and our everything. But in this book, he points us particularly to the Christ seated in heaven with so many aspects to care for us in every way. In Paul’s other epistles, the indwelling Christ is versus our flesh, self, and natural man. In this book, the heavenly Christ is contrasted with the earthly religion and all earthly things. To experience the indwelling Christ we need to turn to our spirit and contact Him. To enjoy the heavenly Christ we need to look away from all things on earth unto Him who is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. By His death and resurrection He has accomplished everything that is needed for both God and us. Now in His ascension He is sitting in the heavens, in the Person of the Son of God (1:5) and the Son of Man (2:6), in the Person of God (1:8) and man (2:6), as the appointed Heir of all things (1:2), the Anointed One of God (1:9), the Captain of our salvation (2:10), the Sanctifier (2:11), the instant Helper and constant Succor (2:18), the Apostle from God

Week 25 – Day 5 (9/28) (Cont'd)

(3:1), the High Priest (2:17; 4:14; 7:26), the Minister in the true tabernacle (8:2) with a more excellent ministry (8:6), the Surety and the Mediator of a better covenant (7:22; 8:6; 12:24), the Executor of the new testament (9:16-17), the Forerunner (6:20), the Author and Perfecter of faith (12:2), and as the great Shepherd of the sheep (13:20). If we look unto Him as such a wonderful and all-inclusive One, He, ministering heaven, life, and strength to us, will transfuse and infuse us with all that He is to enable us to run the heavenly race and to live the heavenly life on earth, carrying us through all the lifelong pathway and leading and bringing us into glory (2:10).

The wonderful Jesus, who is enthroned in heaven and “crowned with glory and honor” (2:9) is the greatest attraction in the universe, like an immense magnet drawing all His seekers unto Him. It is by being attracted by His charming beauty that we look away from all things other than Him. Without such a charming object, how could we look away from so many distracting things on this earth?

F. By Considering Jesus Who Has Endured Contradiction from Sinners against Himself

Verse 3 says, “Consider Him Who has endured such contradiction from sinners against Himself, lest you grow weary, fainting in your souls.” This short word refers us to the four Gospels, where we see how Christ endured such contradiction from sinners. At that time, the sinners were all the religionists, Judaizers, priests, scribes, and elders of the people. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He confronted all these opposers who were doing their best to frustrate or stop Him from the way of God’s new covenant. But He was not frustrated; rather, He cut the way, slaying it by suffering the death of the cross.

G. By Resisting unto Blood, Struggling against Sin

Verse 4 says, “You have not yet resisted unto blood, struggling against sin.” Sin here must refer to something evil in the sight of God that frustrates the believers and holds them back from the new covenant way, for it needs to be resisted, even unto blood.

CI. THE APOSTLE PAUL BEING AN EXAMPLE OF RUNNING THE RACE

Because Paul’s background was exactly that of the Hebrew believers, he was qualified to be an example in running the race. Galatians 2:2 and 1 Corinthians 9:26 and 27 show how he began to run the race. Philippians 3:5-8 and 12-14 show how he was still running the race. In Philippians 3 we see that Paul was a typical Hebrew believer running the race away from the old Jewish religion. In 2 Timothy 4:7 and 8, written shortly before his martyrdom, he told us that he had finished the race.

As Paul was running the race, he said, “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27). Although a saved person can never perish, it is quite possible for him to be a castaway. To be a castaway is to fail in the race, missing the opportunity of reaching the goal. Paul feared that he might be a castaway. The Greek word rendered “castaway” also means a reprobate, one not qualified or approved. Paul seemed to be saying to the Hebrew believers, “Hebrew brothers, you must be careful. Although you have been saved, it is possible that you will be a castaway, one who is disapproved.” This concept fits in with that of reaching the goal and winning the prize as a reward. But there is the possibility that a runner may be a castaway and not be approved for the reward. In Hebrews 12 Paul was warning the Hebrew brothers and encouraging them, giving them a great incentive to run the race. We, like them, must not only walk the way but also run the race

Heb. 10:19, 22 Having therefore, brothers, boldness for entering the Holy of Holies in the blood of Jesus,
22 Let us come forward to the Holy of Holies with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having
our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.
12:7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there
whom the father does not discipline?

MESSAGE FIFTY-ONE

DISCIPLINE FOR HOLINESS

**I. GOD WANTING THE HEBREW BELIEVERS TO BE
HOLY, TO BE SEPARATED ABSOLUTELY UNTO HIM**

In this message we come to the matter of discipline for holiness (12:5-14). One of the basic concepts of this book is that God wanted the Hebrew believers to be holy, to be separated absolutely unto Him, not to remain common in Judaism (v. 14; 3:1), but rather to enter into the Holy of Holies (10:19, 22). True holiness is to enter into the Holy of Holies. Once we have entered into the Holy of Holies, we have reached the peak of holiness. There is no place where we can be more holy than in the Holy of Holies.

Entering into the Holy of Holies is not merely a matter of being in the shekinah glory. Even this is somewhat outward and superficial. Although we may be in the shekinah glory in the Holy of Holies, we still need to experience the contents of the ark. Even inside the ark there is something concealed—the hidden manna in the golden pot. This hidden manna is near the tables of the testimony, the ultimate item in the experience of Christ. To be holy means to reach the consummate point of the experience of Christ, that is, to experience the law of life. Nothing can make us more subjectively holy than the law of life, for it works God’s holy nature, which is true holiness, into our being. God’s divine nature is the substance of holiness. Nothing other than the law of life is able to work God’s divine nature into our being. Only when we experience the law of life can we be truly holy.

The aim of the book of Hebrews is to bring us on into the Holy of Holies, with the intention that we may experience the contents of the ark of testimony. These contents consist of three things: the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the law of life. Both the hidden manna and the budding rod are for our enjoyment and privilege, but the law of life is for God’s working. Through it, He works Himself into our being. Therefore, if we would be holy to the uttermost, we must experience the law of life by which God works Himself into us as our real holiness.

**II. THE PERSECUTION SUFFERED BY
THE HEBREW BELIEVERS BEING A DISCIPLINE**

Hebrews 12:7, referring to the persecution of the Hebrew believers, says, “It is for discipline that you are enduring.” From God’s point of view, the persecution which the Hebrew believers suffered from Judaism was a discipline, a chastening. They were being disciplined that they might be separated from the common things unto the holiness of God.

**III. DISCIPLINE BEING THE FATHER’S DEALING WITH HIS SONS
THAT THE SONS MAY PARTAKE OF THE FATHER’S HOLY NATURE**

Verse 10 says, “For they indeed disciplined us for a few days as it seemed good to them, but He for our profit that we might partake of His holiness.” Discipline is the Father’s dealing with His sons that they may partake of His holy nature. God’s discipline, God’s dealing with us, is to bring us into His intention, which is that we forsake everything other than the Holy of Holies and enter into the Holy of Holies where we may have genuine holiness. However, like the Hebrew believers in the ancient times, many of us do not cooperate with God in this way. Thus, under His sovereignty, He disciplines us that we might be brought into His intention.

Week 26 – Day 1 (10/1) (Cont'd)

As we have seen, holiness is God's nature, and to partake of God's holiness is to partake of His nature. It was common, unholy, for the Hebrew believers to remain in Judaism. They needed to be separated to God's new covenant that they might partake of God's holy nature. For this purpose, persecution was aroused to discipline them that they might be separated from the common to the holy.

In verse 9 God is called the "Father of spirits." "Father of spirits" is contrasted with "fathers of our flesh." In regeneration, we are born of God (John 1:13) in our spirit (John 3:6). Hence, He is the Father of our spirits. Since the staggering Hebrew believers were wandering in their mind, not following the Lord in their spirit, the Father of spirits used the persecution by Judaism to force them to turn from their mind to their spirit (4:12) that they might partake of His holy nature.

IV. DISCIPLINE BEING FOR HOLINESS, RESULTING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

Discipline is for holiness resulting in righteousness. Holiness is the inward nature, the nature of the divine life, and righteousness is the outward behavior, the behavior of the sanctified believers, which comes out of the inward nature and which brings forth the peaceable fruit, the fruit of peace (v. 11; Isa. 32:17). If we have never been permeated inwardly with God's holy nature, we can never have proper righteousness in our outward behavior. Firstly, the law of life must work God's divine nature into us. Then in our outward behavior we shall have the peaceable fruit of righteousness as the issue of inward holiness. In our practical experience, holiness is first, righteousness is second, and peace is third.

The Hebrew believers were being persecuted by the Judaizers. Some of the persecutors were probably their relatives, perhaps even parents or children. As they were under this persecution, they tried to make peace with their persecutors. But they did so at the neglect of their holiness. Holiness is entering into the Holy of Holies to reach the law of life, the working of which saturates us with God's holy nature. When we are saturated with God's nature, we spontaneously have the issue of righteousness, and this righteousness brings in genuine peace. Many Christians have a peace which is not genuine; it is a peace which comes from compromise. Some of the Hebrew believers might have said, "Oh, father, if you will not let me be in the new covenant way absolutely, then maybe I can go with you to the temple on the seventh day and attend the Christian assembly on the eighth day, the first day of the week. Then we can be at peace." This peace is a peace through compromise, a peace which comes from sacrificing holiness.

As we have seen, peace is the fruit of righteousness, and holiness is the inward nature, while righteousness is the outward behavior. God's discipline helps the believers not only to partake of His holiness, but also to make them right with both God and man that in such a condition of righteousness they might enjoy peace as a sweet and peaceable fruit of righteousness.

Heb. 12:12-13 Therefore set straight the hands which hang down and the paralyzed knees, 13 And make straight paths for your feet, that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather may be healed. 10:19-21 Having therefore, brothers, boldness for entering the Holy of Holies in the blood of Jesus, 20 Which entrance He initiated for us as a new and living way through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 And having a great Priest over the house of God,

V. THE WEARIED AND PARALYZED HEBREW BELIEVERS NEEDING TO MAKE STRAIGHT PATHS THAT THE LAMED MEMBERS MAY NOT BE PUT OUT OF JOINT BUT RATHER MAY BE HEALED

Verses 12 and 13 say, “Wherefore lift up the wearied hands and the paralyzed knees, and make straight paths for your feet that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather may be healed.” The Christian life is not a matter of theoretical doctrines for the mind. Rather, it must be practical in providing paths for our feet. All the sound, healthy doctrines of the Bible are for the paths. This is absolutely true with this book of Hebrews. This book firstly ministers to us the most high and healthy doctrines concerning Christ and His new covenant. Then, based upon the proper doctrines which it has shown us, it charges us to run the race and make straight paths for our feet. The first section of this book (1:1-10:18) is of doctrines, and the second (10:19-13:25) is of a race, of paths.

In verse 13 the writer tells the Hebrew believers to “make straight paths for your feet that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather may be healed.” The Greek word translated “put out of joint” may also be rendered “dislocated” or “wrenched.” The implication of the context is that the staggering Hebrew believers should abandon all appearance of the practices of Judaism (that is, to make straight paths) that they, the lamed members (limbs) of the Body may not fall into apostasy (that is, may not be put out of joint), but rather may be fully brought into the new covenant way (that is, may be healed). Thus, to make straight paths is to abandon all appearance of the practice of Judaism; not to be lamed is not to fall into apostasy; and to be healed is to be fully brought into the new covenant way.

The new covenant way must be straight, having no curves. If the Hebrew believers still went to the temple on the Sabbath day with their relatives, they would have been making curves in the paths of the new covenant way. Every compromising activity is a curve. I like the way highways are built in the United States—straight and flat. Many Christians today have seen the new covenant way, that is, the way of the Lord’s recovery. Although they know that the way of the church life in the Lord’s recovery is the right way, they do not dare to pay the full price. They compromise by putting curves in the way of the church in the Lord’s recovery. How could the Hebrew believers make the new testament way straight? Only by abandoning every appearance of Judaism. They had to say to their relatives, “Because the temple is an appearance of the Jewish practice, I will never go there with you on the Sabbath day.” Some saints today who have seen the way of the church are afraid of being criticized and say, “Let us not go to the extreme and cause trouble. Let us go along with others a little bit.” During the past fifty years, God has never honored such a compromise. Some have said, “Yes, we know that we are the church, but we should not say this because others will be offended. Let us just be the church.” This is compromise. If you are a lamb, you must say that you are a lamb. If you are a dove, you must declare that you are a dove. We should not say, “I am a lamb, but it is better not to say that I am a lamb.” By compromising in this way, many have added curves to God’s straight paths. If denominations are wrong, we must plainly say that they are wrong. In the book, *Further Talks on the Church Life*, Brother Watchman Nee says that if denominations are wrong, we should tear them down to the ground. We should not shake hands over the denominational fences in a compromising way. Shaking hands over the fence makes curves in the path.

In the past twelve years, which way has won the fighting in the United States and in Europe? Not the curved way but the straight way. God will never honor the curves. God is not a God of curves; He is a straight God. If a certain way is not right, we must condemn it. But if it is right, we must tell everyone, including the angels and the demons, that it is right. To make the way straight is to abandon the appearance

Week 26 – Day 2 (10/2) (Cont'd)

of anything that is not God's new covenant way.

The lame members alluded to in verse 13 were the staggering Hebrew Christians. Paul did not want the lame members to be put out of joint, that is, to be dislocated. To be put out of joint, dislocated, is to fall into apostasy, into the heresy of Judaism. The staggering Hebrew believers were in danger of falling into such apostasy. If your ankle is out of joint, it will be easy for you to fall from the right way. The words "but rather may be healed" mean to be brought fully into the new covenant way.

During the early years of the Lord's recovery in this country, I saw the lameness and paralysis in the denominations. If the denominations were right, we had to join with them. But if they were wrong, we had to declare that they were wrong and tell people what was the right way. By the Lord's mercy, this is what we did. We were, of course, condemned for it. But we do not care for people's condemnation; we care about God's honor. By His mercy, we sounded the trumpet in a clear way, describing things as they really were. Many were lame because the way was not straight but was full of curves. It was very difficult for them to find the right way. Praise the Lord that in the Lord's recovery in the United States today there is a highway from Los Angeles to New York. Because the way has been made straight, many ankles have been healed. In the Lord's recovery today, there is hardly one of us who is in danger of being out of joint. We all have been healed. According to Hebrews 12, to be healed is to be brought fully into God's new testament way. Today everyone's eyes are clear. Black is black, white is white, and gray is gray. Thank the Lord for such a straight path. I praise the Lord that there is hardly any dislocating or wrenching and that everyone is standing upright and walking along the straight path. We are not only walking—we are running.

VI. THE PROPER CHRISTIAN LIFE BEING A BALANCE BETWEEN PEACE AND HOLINESS

Verse 14 says, "Pursue peace with all men, and holiness without which no one shall see the Lord." The proper Christian life must be a balance between peace and holiness. With God, holiness is His holy nature; with us, it is our separation unto God. The implication here is that while we are pursuing peace with all men, we must also pay attention to the matter of holiness before God. Our pursuing peace with all men must be balanced by our holiness before God, our separation unto God, without which no one shall see the Lord and have fellowship with Him.

We should not attempt to have peace with others without first having holiness. Peace without holiness means compromise. We do not want such a compromising peace. We want the peace that is the product of holiness. In the past years I have met many Christians who compromised in order to keep the peace. Eventually, there was no peace among them. Outwardly, they compromised about so many things, but inwardly they were fighting with one another. Praise the Lord that in His recovery today, the more we come into the Holy of Holies, the more we are at peace. If the elders in a certain local church are not at peace with one another, that is a shame. When we care for holiness, that is, for being in the Holy of Holies, we have true peace. Praise the Lord that for more than twelve years the church in Los Angeles has been at peace. The same is true of the church in Anaheim. When you come here, you cannot find a hint that peace is lacking. The peace among us is not produced by compromise; it is produced by the holiness in the Holy of Holies.

Heb. 10:23-24 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope unwavering, for He who has promised is faithful; 24 And let us consider one another so as to incite one another to love and good works,

John 1: 14, 17 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and reality came through Jesus Christ.

The staggering Hebrew Christians tried to keep the peace with their opposers, but eventually they lost their holiness. Therefore, the writer tried his best to bring them back to the proper peace, the peace which is the fruit of righteousness and true holiness. Peace is for us to live with man, and holiness is for us to see the Lord. Although you may have peace with man, do you still have the presence of the Lord? We must firstly care for the Lord's presence and then for our living with others. Our peace must issue from the Lord's presence. For us today, His presence is our practical holiness.

MESSAGE FIFTY-TWO

DO NOT FALL AWAY FROM GRACE

In chapter twelve we have the fifth and final warning in the book of Hebrews. This book has a special arrangement. It has five main teachings, and with each teaching there is a warning. Three of the warnings come after the teachings (3:7-4:13; 10:19-39; 12:1-29), and two are inserted into the teachings (2:1-4; 5:11-6:20). All of chapter twelve is a warning which follows the teaching given in chapter eleven. This warning tells us to run the race and not to fall away from grace. The race needs the grace, and the grace is sufficient for the race.

Before we consider the matter of falling from grace, I would like to say a further word concerning the race. In chapters ten and twelve we have three synonymous terms. In 10:20 we have the "new and living way" and in 12:1 we have the race. As we have seen, the race is the way on which we are running. If we are walking, the way remains a way, but once we begin to run, the way becomes the race. The third of these synonymous terms is paths (12:13). The living way, the race, and the paths all point to the same thing. The way on which we walk should be the race we are running, and the race should be the paths. Whether we call it the race, the way, or the paths, the meaning is the same.

Perhaps you are wondering why both the way and the race are singular while the paths are plural. This is like one freeway which has many sections. The many sections are many paths.

The way in 10:20 is the way to enter into the Holy of Holies, and the race in 12:1 is for reaching the goal and obtaining the reward. In 12:13 we see that on this highway into the Holy of Holies and toward God's goal, there are paths, and that these paths must be straight, not having any curves. Some Christians have weak ankles. If their way is not made straight, they will fall away because their ankles are weak. Hence, we must make straight paths that their ankles would not be put out of joint, that is, be dislocated or wrenched, but rather be healed.

To remain in the Holy of Holies is to continue the running of the race. According to our experience, whenever we exercise our mind to compromise a little, we can sense deep within our spirit that we are away from God's presence, that we are no longer in the Holy of Holies. Immediately, our way of contacting God is no longer straight; it has become curved. This curve leads us away from the Holy of Holies, away from the ark of testimony, the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the tables of the testimony. Although at the beginning we may be only a short way off from the Holy of Holies, eventually we find that we are a great distance away.

Our race must eventually be in the Holy of Holies. If we are running the race only in the outer court, we are too shallow. We must run our race in the Holy of Holies. Perhaps you are thinking that the Holy of Holies is too small an area in which to run a race. Yes, in the tabernacle it was a cube only ten cubits in length, width, and height (Exo. 26:8, 16). In the temple it became twenty cubits in length, width, and height (1 Kings 6:20). Eventually, in the New Jerusalem it will be twelve thousand stadia in length, width,

Week 26 – Day 3 (10/3) (Cont'd)

and height (Rev. 21:16). The cubical dimensions of the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and in the temple and of the New Jerusalem signify the completeness of God's eternal being. From any direction, God is perfect and complete. His completeness and perfection is eternal, unlimited.

The more we run, the larger the Holy of Holies becomes, expanding from the tabernacle, to the temple, and ultimately to the New Jerusalem. When we first run the race in the tabernacle, it is ten cubits. As we continue to run, it becomes twenty cubits in the temple and twelve thousand stadia in the New Jerusalem. When we run the race in eternity, we shall discover that it is eternally spacious. This is very meaningful.

We can never exhaust the race in the Holy of Holies. I have been running the race for many years, and the more I run, the longer, wider, and higher the Holy of Holies becomes. For the young people, the Holy of Holies in which they are running may be just ten cubits long, wide, and high. After they have been running the race for a number of years, it will be much larger. When we enter into eternity, we shall see that the whole city of New Jerusalem, which is the same in each of its three dimensions, is the Holy of Holies. Today our continual race is in the Holy of Holies, and the paths of this continual race must be made straight. In order to make the paths straight, we must have grace. We must run the race and not fall away from grace. We need grace to run the race.

I. THE GRACE OF GOD

Now we must ask a crucial question: what is grace? When I was young, I was taught by some great teachers that grace means that we do nothing and that God does everything for us. According to this teaching, anything we do is work, not grace, but whatever the Lord does for us is grace. For example, there is no need for us to do anything for our sins. If we do this, it is our work. The Lord Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and that is grace. Are you satisfied with this definition of grace? For a while, I was satisfied with it. But as a result of considering certain verses in the Bible, I began to question it. John 1:17 says that grace came through Jesus Christ, and John 1:16 says, "Of His fullness we all received, and grace upon grace" (Recovery Version). In 1 Corinthians 15:10 the Apostle Paul says, "By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." One day, as I was comparing this verse with Galatians 2:20 where Paul says, "Not I, but Christ liveth in me," I realized that grace is just God in Christ dispensed into our being for our enjoyment in our experience. It is not only the work the Lord does for us; it is the Triune God Himself dispensed into our being and experienced as our enjoyment. In brief, grace is the Triune God experienced by us. According to the entire revelation of the New Testament, grace is nothing less than God in Christ dispensed into our being for our enjoyment. Firstly, He is dispensed into our spirit, and then, as He spreads into our inward parts, He becomes our enjoyment. This grace has come to us through Christ (John 1:14, 17), and it is the grace of Christ (2 Cor. 13:14; 12:9), even Christ Himself (Gal. 6:18; cf. 2 Tim. 4:22).

- Gal. 5:4 You have been brought to nought, separated from Christ, you who are being justified by law; you have fallen from grace.
6:18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.
Heb. 12:28 Therefore receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us have grace, through which we may serve God well-pleasingly with piety and fear;
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II. TO FALL AWAY FROM GRACE BEING TO FALL AWAY FROM CHRIST

To fall away from the grace of God is to fall away from Christ. When we are “fallen from grace” we are “severed from Christ” (Gal. 5:4, Gk.). In this matter Paul warned the churches of Galatia, which were in the same danger as the Hebrew believers, not to be “severed from Christ” by being turned aside to the law of the Jewish religion, lest they fall away from the grace of God which is Christ Himself. We should not fall away from grace, but rather “have grace” (v. 28), “be confirmed by grace” (13:9), and “stand in grace” (Rom. 5:2). Both Galatians and Hebrews close with the blessings of grace (Gal. 6:18; Heb. 13:25).

According to the Greek, to be severed from Christ means to be cut off from Him like a branch is cut off from a tree. We all have had this experience. A number of times when we were cut off from the fellowship with the living Christ, we also had the sense that we were severed from grace. On the contrary, when we are in intimate fellowship with the dear Lord, we have the deep sense that we are in grace, having grace for our strength and enjoyment and for our every need. If we need life, grace is life. If we need strength and comfort, grace is our strength and comfort. Thus, in an experiential way, not in a doctrinal way, we clearly see that grace is Christ Himself.

A. For the Hebrew Believers to Fall Away from the Grace of God Being to Give Up the Enjoyment of Christ in the New Covenant Way and to Return to Their Old Religion

For the Hebrew believers to fall away from the grace of God was to give up the enjoyment of Christ in the new covenant way and to return to their old religion. The arrangement of the furniture of the tabernacle is a revelation of the enjoyment of Christ. At the altar, we enjoy Christ as our sacrifices, and at the laver we enjoy Him as the life-giving Spirit who washes us. At the showbread table we enjoy Christ as our daily supply, at the lampstand we enjoy Him as our light of life, and at the incense altar we enjoy Him as the resurrection fragrance by which we are accepted by God. Then at the ark of testimony within the Holy of Holies, we enjoy Christ as the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the law of life. This is the enjoyment of Christ according to the new covenant way. If the Hebrew believers had given up this way, they would have fallen away from grace. We should not understand 12:15 in a superficial way. If we plunge into the depths of Hebrews, we shall realize that what the writer meant by not falling away from the grace of God was not giving up the new covenant way of enjoying Christ. In other words, the writer seemed to be saying, “Hebrew believers, do not go back to Judaism. If you do, you will be giving up the way to enjoy Christ as your grace, and you will fall away from the grace of God.”

B. The Hebrew Believers Remaining in the New Covenant Way by Having Grace, Being Confirmed by Grace, and Standing in Grace

Verse 28 says, “Let us have grace, through which we may serve God well-pleasingly with godly fear and awe.” For the Hebrew believers to remain in the new covenant way was to “have grace.” I prefer the translation, “take grace” to “have grace,” for the word “have” in this verse is the equivalent of “take.” A mother will often say to her child, “Take your food,” or “Take your milk.” Likewise, we all need to take grace and to help one another to take grace. If your wife is about to give you a difficult time, you must tell

Week 26 – Day 4 (10/4) (Cont'd)

her to take grace. To remain in the new covenant way is to take grace. Whenever we take even a little grace, the entire situation is changed. Sometimes when a brother and his wife are sitting at the dining table, everything is dark. In such a situation, I would advise the wife to be the first to take grace. If she would do this, the dining table would shine, and the husband would say, “Praise the Lord!” Grace certainly is the most healthy food.

In 13:9 Paul tells us to “be confirmed by grace,” and in Romans 5:2 he says that we should stand in grace. Since we all have received grace, we now need to stand in it. Once we take grace and have been confirmed by grace, we shall be able to stand in grace.

III. THE CAUSE OF FALLING AWAY FROM THE GRACE OF GOD

A. The Root of Bitterness—The Judaizer

In verses 15 and 16, Paul says, “Looking carefully lest anyone be falling away from the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and through this many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for one meal gave up his birthright.” In these verses we see three causes of falling away from the grace of God: the bitter root, the fornicator, and the profane person. According to the implication of the context of this book, the root of bitterness must be some Judaizer who could cause the Hebrew believers to be turned aside from the grace of God to the rituals of Judaism and, neglecting the holiness of God, to thus defile themselves in the sight of God. This root of bitterness troubled the Hebrew believers by convincing them with Judaism and capturing them back to Judaism to be defiled in the common religion, rather than to be sanctified unto the Holy God. The Judaizers attempted to convince the Hebrew believers that the new covenant way was wrong and that the old covenant way was right. In principle, there have been some roots of bitterness in the churches in the Lord’s recovery. Such a root of bitterness will say that there is heresy in the churches. Recently there was such a root of bitterness in one of the churches, and several dear ones were poisoned. Once this poison of bitterness enters into a person, it is not easily extracted. I have seen this not only in the United States but also in Taiwan and in mainland China.

We should not listen to the roots of bitterness, for their intention is to damage the Lord’s recovery. The root of bitterness can cause us to fall away from the grace of God. I have the full assurance that the Lord’s recovery is the best place for us to enjoy grace today. If you leave the Lord’s recovery, you will certainly fall away from the grace of God. Deep within our spirit, we know that before we came into the church we never enjoyed grace like we do now. Do not care for what the opposers say; care for your experience. The opposers always try to stir up your mentality, just like the serpent stirred up Eve’s mind. Once they have stirred up your mentality to think things over, they will poison you with their talk. As a result, you will either leave the Lord’s recovery, or else you will be cold and negative concerning it.

1 Chr. 5:1-2 And the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn; but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel; but he was not to be enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright, 2 For Judah prevailed among his brothers, and from him was the leader, but the birthright was Joseph's) –
Heb. 12:23 And to the church of the firstborn, who have been enrolled in the heavens; and to God, the Judge of all; and to the spirits of righteous men who have been made perfect;

B. The Fornicator

The second cause of falling away from the grace of God is the fornicator. When Paul wrote verse 16, he might have had in mind Reuben, the first son of Jacob, who was wrecked by his fleshly lust and thereby lost his birthright (Gen. 49:3-4; 1 Chron. 5:1). By the lust of the flesh, the fornicator is kept from the enjoyment of Christ in God's new covenant. Nothing ruins God's people as much as fornication does. We all must flee it. The fornicator, like Reuben, will lose the blessing of the birthright because of the defilement of his lust.

C. The Profane Person

The third cause is the profane person. The profane person is one who loves the world and the worldly things, and who is captured by the entertainment of physical things. He is like Esau who sold his birthright for one meal (Gen. 25:29-34). Esau's birthright as the firstborn son of Isaac was the double portion of the land, the priesthood, and the kingship. Due to his profaneness in giving up his birthright, the double portion of land was given to Joseph (1 Chron. 5:1-2), the priesthood went to Levi (Deut. 33:8-10), and the kingship was assigned to Judah (Gen. 49:10; 1 Chron. 5:2). Verse 17, speaking of Esau says, "For you know that also afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it with tears." The words, "no place for repentance," do not mean that Esau had no ground to repent, but that he had no way to reverse by repentance the result of what he had done.

We Christians, born of God, are the "firstfruits of His creatures" (James 1:18) which He has reaped in His creation. In this sense, we are the firstborn sons of God. Hence, the church composed of us is called the church of the firstborn ones (12:23). As the firstborn sons of God, we have the birthright of the firstborn. This includes the inheritance of the earth (2:5-6), the priesthood (Rev. 20:6), and the kingship (Rev. 20:4), which will be the main blessings in the coming kingdom and which the profane, world-loving-and-seeking Christians will lose at the Lord's coming back. Eventually, this birthright will be a reward to the overcoming Christians in the millennial kingdom. Any worldly enjoyment, even one meal, can cause us to forfeit this birthright of ours. If after such a serious warning, the Hebrew believers still preferred to indulge in one meal of their old religion, they would have missed the full enjoyment of Christ and lost the kingdom rest with all its blessings.

Actually, what we are privileged to enjoy in Christ today is the foretaste of the blessings in the coming kingdom. The proper enjoyment of this foretaste will usher us into the full taste of the kingdom blessings. If we do not enjoy Christ today as our good land, how can we enter into His rest in the kingdom and inherit the earth with Him? If we do not exercise our priesthood today to contact Him and prayerfully minister to Him, how can we fulfill our priestly duty in the kingdom? If we do not exercise our spirit with a God-given authority to rule our self, our flesh, our entire being, and the enemy with all his power of darkness today, how can we be Christ's co-kings and rule the nations with Him in His kingdom (Rev. 2:26-27)? Our enjoyment of Christ and the practice of the priesthood and kingship today are the preparation and qualification for our participating in Christ's kingdom tomorrow.

In Genesis 1, we see that God created man in His image so that man might express Him. According to the deep thought of the book of Hebrews, expressing God is a matter of the priesthood. To have the priesthood today in the new covenant way is to have the law of life work God into our being that we may become His expression and testimony. This is what it means to be the priesthood expressing God's image.

Week 26 – Day 5 (10/5) (Cont'd)

From the very beginning, man was destined to be God's priest. Furthermore, the man created in the image of God was committed with God's dominion to rule over all created things. This is the kingship. Expressing God in His image is the priesthood, and ruling over all created things with God's dominion and authority is the kingship. Hence, both the priesthood and the kingship were with man in the beginning. Moreover, God gave the earth to man that he might take possession of it and replenish it through the spreading of God's expression and dominion. Therefore, in Genesis 1 we see the priesthood, the kingship, and the land, the three things assigned by God to man as his destiny.

After Adam fell, God selected another race, the race of Abraham, to be His people. By reading the Old Testament, we see that God's intention with the children of Israel was the same as with mankind originally. God intended to give the children of Israel the priesthood that they might express Him and His authority that they might represent Him. God also gave them the best land on earth. Hence, with the children of Israel there were the priesthood, the kingship, and the land. However, most of the children of Israel became fallen. Although Reuben, the first son of Jacob, should have had the birthright, he lost it due to his fall and the defilement of his fleshly lust. As a result, the birthright was divided. The land portion of the birthright went to Joseph, whose two sons received the double portion of the land, the priesthood portion went to Levi, and the kingship portion went to Judah.

When we come to the New Testament, we see that God's intention is that all the church people express God through the priesthood, represent Him with the kingship, and take possession of the land in order to have the proper human living. No one on earth today has a proper human living. The unbelievers do not have it because they are still fallen, and we Christians, though we are saved, do not have it now because this is the time for us to lose our soul and to suffer for God's testimony. According to the book of Hebrews, one day we shall have all three items of the birthright. The land, the coming inhabited earth, is mentioned in chapter two. In the future, the inhabited earth will be given to us, the human partners of Christ. In the next age, we shall possess the land, rule the whole earth, and be the priesthood. During the coming millennial kingdom, we shall have the proper human life. That will be the full recovery of what was lost in Genesis 3. When, in the coming age of the kingdom, all the overcomers take possession of the inhabited earth, express God as priests, and rule as kings over the nations, everything that was given to man in Genesis 1 will be recovered. That will be the proper human living. This is God's intention.

Because not all of God's people care for His intention, He has made it a reward for those who do care for it. In the past, we have seen the reward and the gaining of the soul. The gaining of the soul is simply having the proper human life with the proper humanity. We cannot have such a life today because the earth has not been cleared up. But in the coming age of the kingdom, the whole earth will be cleared up, and we shall enter into our possession and be God's priesthood to express Him and His kingship to represent Him. Then we shall be the proper humanity living by Jesus, the proper man, to fulfill God's eternal purpose. At that time, Genesis 1 will be completely fulfilled. The whole earth will be under the possession of the proper humanity, which will be the expression of God in the priesthood and the representation of God in the kingship. This is God's intention in His eternal purpose, which has been assigned by our wise God and Father to be our portion and reward. During the coming age of the kingdom, we shall be in perfection and glorification and shall gain our soul to enjoy the proper human living with the proper humanity. This is the goal of God's intention, the reward, and the birthright.

Since we have this birthright today, we must exercise it. We must exercise our spirit to express God, to represent God, and to enjoy Christ as our real land. If we fail to do these three things today, how shall we be able to do them during the coming age of the kingdom? We must practice the priesthood and the kingship and we must enjoy and take full possession of our good land today. If we do this, we shall be fully prepared to enter into the joy of taking possession of the coming inhabited earth and of exercising our priesthood and kingship. At that time, we shall receive the reward and enjoy the birthright. This is God's goal.