

**Labor Day Blending Conference of the Churches in Northern California  
September 2-4, 2022**

**GENERAL SUBJECT: GOD'S ECONOMY IN FAITH**

Message One

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

Scripture Reading: Prov. 29:18a; Acts 26:18a; 1 Tim. 1:4; Gal. 2:16, 20; Heb. 11:1, 5-6

- I. We in the Lord's recovery must have a vision of God's economy, and we need to be governed, controlled, and directed by this vision—Acts 26:18a; Prov. 29:18a.**
- II. God's economy is God's household administration, which is to dispense Himself in Christ into His chosen and redeemed people that He may have a house to express Himself, which house is the church, the Body of Christ—1 Tim. 1:4; 3:15; Eph. 1:22-23:**
  - A. The central subject of the Bible is the economy of God, and the entire Bible is concerned with the economy of God; unless we know God's economy, we will not understand the Bible—1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 1:10; Luke 24:45.
  - B. The economy of God is that God became flesh, passed through human living, died, resurrected, and became the life-giving Spirit to enter into us as life and to dispense God into us so that we may be transformed for the producing of the church, which is the Body of Christ, the house of God, the kingdom of God, and the counterpart of Christ, the ultimate aggregate of which is the New Jerusalem—John 1:14, 29; 12:24; 20:22; 14:2; 3:3, 5, 29-30; Rev. 21:2, 10.
  - C. The Lord's recovery is for the carrying out of God's economy—Eph. 3:2.
- III. God's economy is initiated and developed in the sphere of faith—1 Tim. 1:4:**
  - A. On the negative side, to exercise faith is to stop our work, our doing; on the positive side, to exercise faith is to trust in the Lord—Heb. 11:6.
  - B. God's economy is carried out not by our doing in ourselves but by our believing into Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God—John 3:15-16.
  - C. Faith is a matter of seeing a view of the contents of God's economy; because we have seen a revelation regarding the contents of God's economy, we spontaneously believe in what we see—Eph. 3:9; Heb. 12:2.
  - D. The Christian life is a life of faith, a life of believing; we do not live according to what we see but according to what we believe—John 20:25-29; Gal. 3:2, 14; 2 Cor. 5:7; cf. 4:18.
- IV. Faith is the unique requirement for us to contact God in His economy and the unique way for us to carry out His economy—Gal. 2:16, 20:**
  - A. Galatians 2:16 says that we are justified through faith in Jesus Christ, literally, faith of Jesus Christ:
    1. Faith is related to the believers' appreciation of the person of the Son of God as the most precious One—1 Pet. 2:7.
    2. Christ is infusing Himself into us to be the faith in us; He becomes in us the faith by which we believe and the capacity to believe through our appreciation of Him—Gal. 2:16; Heb. 12:2.
  - B. In Galatians 2:20 the apostle Paul says, "I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God":
    1. *The faith of the Son of God* refers to the faith of Jesus Christ in us, which becomes the faith by which we believe in Him—vv. 16, 20; 3:22.
    2. As we treasure Him, He causes faith to be generated in us, enabling us to believe in Him—Matt. 17:5; Heb. 12:2.

3. According to our Christian experience, the genuine living faith that operates in us is not only *of* Christ but also *in* Christ—Rom. 3:22, 26; Gal. 2:16, 20:
  - a. As Christ operates in us, He becomes our faith; this faith is of Him and also in Him.
  - b. The faith that we need is not only faith in the Son of God but also faith of the Son of God; in and by this faith we can carry out God's economy in faith—v. 20; 1 Tim. 1:4.

**V. Faith is the substantiation of God's facts; the word *substantiation* in Hebrews 11:1 means the capacity to make something real (colors are substantiated by our eyes, sounds by our ears, etc.):**

- A. All of God's facts recorded in the Bible are real; however, these facts can be substantiated only by faith.
- B. The accomplished facts of Christ's person, living, and work must be substantiated by us, that is, made real to us.
- C. Believing is exercising our spirit of faith (2 Cor. 4:13) to substantiate the divine facts; once we believe by saying Amen to God's word, we substantiate the divine facts, and we have them.

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

- A. Without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to God, to make God happy—Heb. 11:6a.
- B. To believe that God is, is to believe that He is everything to us and that we are nothing; He must be the only One, the unique One, in everything, and we must be nothing in everything—Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5; John 8:58; Eccl. 1:2.
- C. To believe that God is, is to deny our self—Luke 9:23; Gal. 2:20.

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

- A. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe in the fact that God is love—1 John 4:8.
- B. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe in the fact that God's grace is sufficient—2 Cor. 12:9.
- C. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe in the fact that Christ is able to save us to the uttermost—Heb. 7:25.
- D. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe in the fact that we are in Christ, that Christ is in us, and that we and Christ are one—1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:27; John 14:20; 15:5.
- E. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe in the fact that we are God's children and heirs—Rom. 8:16-17.
- F. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe in the fact that we have been made full in Christ—Col. 2:10.
- G. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe in the fact that we are the temple of the living God and that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within us—1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16.
- H. We withstand the devil by being firm in our subjective faith in God's protecting power and loving concern—1 Pet. 5:8-9:
  1. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe that the Lord was manifested for the purpose of destroying the works of the devil—1 John 3:8.
  2. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe that the Lord's death has destroyed him who has the might of death, the devil—Heb. 2:14.
  3. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe that the Lord's resurrection has put Satan to shame; the resurrection life is a life that cannot be touched by death, that transcends death, that is beyond the boundary of death, that comes out of death, and that death cannot hold—Acts 2:23-24; Phil. 3:10; Col. 2:12-15, 20; 3:1; John 14:30.
  4. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe that the ascension of the Lord has put Him far above the power of Satan—Eph. 1:20-22; 2:6; 6:11, 13.

5. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe that the victory of the Lord is complete and that our whole life is included in this victory; we must see that we have already overcome and that we fight from a position of victory in order to maintain our victory; we can overcome because we are all included in the Lord as the leading Overcomer; He is the Head, center, reality, life, and nature of the man-child, and the man-child as the following overcomers is the Lord's Body—Rev. 3:21; 12:5.

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

- A. Faith opens the door to every blessing that is ours in Christ—2 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 1:3.
- B. Faith cuts off the flesh with its natural energy and effort and gives us access into God's grace and a solid standing in grace—Rom. 5:2.
- C. The righteousness that is God Himself lived out of us is through faith in Christ—Phil. 3:9.
- D. We are sanctified dispositionally by faith—Acts 26:18; Rom. 6:19, 22.
- E. The inward cleansing of man's heart can be accomplished only by the Holy Spirit with the divine life by faith—Acts 15:9.
- F. Christ makes His home deep down in our hearts through faith—Eph. 3:17.
- G. At the time of our regeneration, we believed into Christ and received the Spirit by faith as the ultimate blessing of the gospel; after this, God is supplying the Spirit to us continually, and our receiving the Spirit is a lifelong, continuous matter by the hearing of faith—Gal. 3:2-5, 14.
- H. We are inheriting the promises of God through faith—Heb. 6:12.
  - I. We have victory over the world through faith—1 John 5:4.
  - J. We have victory over the evil one by taking up the shield of faith—Eph. 6:16.
- K. Through faith we are able to overcome in the midst of all our circumstances of suffering and difficulties—Heb. 11:33-34.
- L. We are kept by the power of God through faith, and we have power through faith—1 Pet. 1:5; Matt. 17:19-20; 21:21-22.

**IX. As people of faith, we are people of "today"—Heb. 3:7-8a, 13, 15; 4:7:**

"All of us should be people of today...Do not look ahead to the future, and do not look back to the past. We are people of today...We will never have tomorrow. All the time we have is today. Every day is a today. When we enter into the New Jerusalem, we will have today since every day in eternity is today. The only day we have is today. Be filled inwardly [with the Spirit] today. Be filled outwardly [with the Spirit] today. Be filled today" (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1985, vol. 5, "The Way to Practice the Lord's Present Move," pp. 484-485*).

## Message Two

### **The Linking Faith—the Faith of the Overcomers**

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

#### **I. In order to be men full of faith (Heb. 13:7; Acts 6:5), we need to see that “faith comes out of hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17):**

- A. The source of faith is the word, but we have to realize the crystallization of this point; there are three aspects of the word:
  - 1. First, there is the written word of God—the Bible—John 10:35.
  - 2. Then there is the living word of God—Christ—1:1.
  - 3. Finally, there is the applied word of God—the Spirit—Eph. 6:17; John 6:63.
- B. The written word, the living word, and the applied word refer to God Himself; God’s written word in the Bible becomes Christ as the living word, who is applied to us as the Spirit, the word of the Spirit; the more that God is gained by us in this way, the more He becomes our faith.
- C. The crystallization of the source of faith is God in His written word contacted as the living word and applied as the word of the Spirit so that we can gain the Triune God, who is able to call the things not being as being and give life to the dead—Rom. 4:17.

#### **II. We need to see the effect of faith—nothing is impossible to faith:**

- A. “If you have faith like a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Move from here to there, and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you”—Matt. 17:20b.
- B. *Hymns*, #535, written by Charles Wesley, expresses the effect of faith; stanza 5 says, “Let me no longer live, but Thee,” indicating that faith always annuls us and reveals Christ to us.
- C. Only God is all able, omnipotent; nothing is impossible to Him (19:26); but the Lord also said that nothing is impossible to faith, indicating that God and faith are one; faith is the subjective God applied to our being; thus, just as nothing is impossible to God, nothing is impossible to faith.

#### **III. The believers, the believing ones in Christ, are the household of faith—Gal. 6:10:**

- A. This household is a big family, and the family name is “faith”; this is the home of faith; we may say that a certain home is the Smith home or the Lee home, but now we are all members of the “faith home.”
- B. We are members of the great family, the household, of faith; this faith house is a house that believes in God through His word—Heb. 1:2; Matt. 17:5.

#### **IV. The believers’ faith in Christ brings them into the life union with Christ (John 3:15, 36); the word of God is embodied in Christ and realized in the Spirit to be our faith; the believers live Christ and walk by this faith:**

- A. To believe into Christ is to receive Him and be united with Him as one—1:12-13; 3:16.
- B. This faith brings us into the life union with Christ, who is the embodiment of God realized as the all-inclusive Spirit to be our faith; faith links us with the Triune God.
- C. As the organism of the Triune God, Christ is the true vine, and we are His branches who have been organically united with Him by believing into Him; we need to remain in this organic union by abiding in Him—15:1, 5.
- D. Faith is the linking of our salvation; it links God with us and links us to God; this linking makes us God-men.
- E. We live Christ by a linking organ, and this linking organ is faith; thus, Paul says in Galatians 2:20 that the life that he lived, he lived by faith, the faith of Jesus the Son of God, “who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

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

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

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

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

- A. To think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think without a sober mind annuls the proper order of the Body life; God gave us the same faith in quality but not in quantity; the matter of quantity depends upon how we grow; if we grow today as the apostle Paul grew, the portion of faith we receive will be greatly enlarged.
- B. God first allotted faith to us in quality, and then He apportioned it in quantity; what kind of faith we have depends upon God’s allotment; how much faith we have depends upon God’s apportioning.
- C. God’s apportioning depends upon our attitude; if we are not sober-minded, God would not increase His apportioning of faith to us, and He probably would even decrease it—cf. Luke 1:53; Matt. 5:3.

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

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

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

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

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

**X. By this linking faith we are linked to God in Christ to participate in all that the all-inclusive Christ is, has, and has attained to, for the producing of the organic members of Christ to constitute and build up His organic Body, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the enlargement and expression of the eternal Triune God in His unlimited glory in the mysterious mingling of divinity with humanity for eternity (Rev. 21:2—22:5); this is the eternal fulfillment of Romans 1:17—"the righteous shall have life and live by faith"!**

Message Three

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

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

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

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

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

- A. The proving of faith is the testing for approval; the Greek word rendered “proving” means “testing for approval.”
- B. We are put into trials because our faith needs to be tested, approved—4:12.
- C. No one who has believed in the Lord and has received grace can avoid the testing of faith—John 3:15, 36; 1:16.
- D. The Bible shows that there is no faith without testing; all faith must be tested—1 Pet. 1:7; 4:12:
  - 1. God tests our faith in order that we may grow in faith and in life—Eph. 4:15:
    - a. No Christian can grow without first having his faith tested.
    - b. When our faith is tested, we spontaneously grow—1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18; 1 Cor. 3:6-7.
  - 2. God tests our faith to satisfy Himself—proving that we have genuine faith—1 Pet. 1:7:
    - a. It is genuine faith that satisfies God—1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5.
    - b. A faith that is approved is a glory to God’s name—1 Pet. 4:11; John 12:28:
      - (1) God’s name is glorified in this world through an approved faith—1 Pet. 1:7.
      - (2) When we pass through tribulations, persecutions, obstacles, and darkness, and we still believe after these tests and still stand fast after these trials, this faith will glorify God’s name—2:12; 4:12, 16.
- E. The approval of faith comes out of the proper faith; the stress here is not on faith but on the proving of faith by trials that come through sufferings—1:7.

- F. In verse 7 Peter says that the proving of our faith is “much more precious than of gold which perishes though it is proved by fire”:
  - 1. The words *much more precious than of gold...by fire* do not modify *faith*; they modify *proving*.
  - 2. This means that the proving of our faith is much more precious than the proving of gold:
    - a. The comparison here is that between the proving of our faith and the proving of gold.
    - b. Gold is proved by the purifying fire; in like manner, our faith is proved by trial.
- G. It is the trying, the proving, of faith, not the faith itself, that may be found unto praise—vv. 7-8:
  - 1. This is like the school’s examination of the student’s studying: what is found to be approved is the examination, not the student’s studying itself.
  - 2. If the proving of our faith is positive, the proving will result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ—vv. 7-8:
    - a. The Lord is with us today (Matt. 28:20) but in a hidden, veiled way.
    - b. His coming back will be His revelation, when He will be seen openly by all—Rev. 1:7.
    - c. At that time not only He but also the proving of our faith will be revealed.

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

- A. The salvation in verse 5 is full salvation, ultimate salvation, the salvation of the Triune God; it refers specifically to the salvation of our souls from the dispensational punishment of the Lord’s governmental dealing at His coming back.
- B. This is the salvation—the salvation of our souls—which is ready to be revealed to us at the last time, the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ in glory; the salvation of our souls is the end of our faith—vv. 9, 13; Matt. 16:27.
- C. Our soul will be saved from sufferings into the full enjoyment of the Lord at His revelation, His coming back—25:31:
  - 1. For this salvation we must deny our soul, our soulish life, with all its pleasures in this age so that we may gain it in the enjoyment of the Lord in the coming age—10:37-39; 16:24-27; Luke 17:30-33; John 12:25:
    - a. To lose the soul-life means to lose the enjoyment of the soul, and to save the soul-life means to preserve the soul in its enjoyment—Matt. 16:25.
    - b. We will either lose our soul-life today and gain it in the coming age, or save our soul-life today and lose it in the coming age.
    - c. If we would enter into the Lord’s joy in the coming age, we need to pay the price in this age by losing our soul-life—25:21, 23.
  - 2. At the Lord’s revelation, through His judgment seat, some believers will enter into the joy of the Lord, and some will suffer in weeping and gnashing of teeth—vv. 21, 23; 24:45-46; 25:30; 24:51.
  - 3. To enter into the Lord’s joy is the salvation of our souls—Heb. 10:39:
    - a. The saving, or gaining, of our soul depends on how we deal with our soul in following the Lord after we are saved and regenerated.
    - b. If we lose our soul now for the Lord’s sake, we will save it, and it will be saved, or gained, at the Lord’s coming back—Luke 9:24; 1 Pet. 1:9.
    - c. The gaining of the soul will be the reward of the kingdom to the overcoming followers of the Lord—Heb. 10:35; Matt. 16:22-28.
- D. The power of God is able to guard us unto this salvation so that we may obtain it; the power of God is the cause of our being guarded, and faith is the means through which the power of God becomes effective in guarding us—1 Pet. 1:5.
- E. We should eagerly expect this marvelous, full, and ultimate salvation and prepare ourselves for its splendid revelation—Rom. 8:19, 23.



## Message Four

### **Walking in the Steps of That Faith of Our Father Abraham**

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

#### **I. Christ as the Triune God-man (Col. 2:9) is the seed (descendant, or son) of Abraham (Gen. 12:7; Matt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16); because the believers are in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) and Christ is in them (Col. 1:27), they are one with Christ and are of Christ as a part of Christ (Eph. 5:30); thus, we who have believed into Christ are also Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:7, 29):**

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

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

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

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

- A. God’s appearing and transfusing issue in our consecration, causing us to build an altar, live in a tent, and live totally for God; when we meet God Himself, we have the power to deny ourselves; the denying of the self ceases to be optional when we have met God; no man can see God and live—Exo. 33:20; Job 42:5; Matt. 5:8; 1 John 3:2-3.
- B. An altar is for worshipping God by offering all that we are and have to God for His purpose; building an altar means that our life is for God, that God is our life, and that the meaning of our life is God—Gen. 8:20-21a; Exo. 29:18-22.
- C. Abraham’s dwelling in a tent testified that he did not belong to the world but lived the life of a sojourner on the earth, sojourning by faith, as in a foreign land—Heb. 11:9-10:
  1. The tent is the issue of the altar; the altar and the tent are interrelated and cannot be separated; all the things we possess must pass through the altar; they are given back to us by the Lord to meet our need in the world.
  2. We may use the things that we possess, but they must not govern us; we can have them and let them go; they can be given, and they can be taken away—this is the principle of the tent life.
  3. Erecting a tent is an expression, a declaration, that we do not belong to this world, that we belong to another country; our real country is a better country, a heavenly one, the heavenly New Jerusalem—vv. 13-16, 10; 12:22; Rev. 21:2.
  4. Abraham’s tent was a miniature of the New Jerusalem; the Bible ends with a tent; the New Jerusalem is the ultimate tent, the ultimate tabernacle, in the universe—vv. 2-3.
  5. As we are living in the tent of the church life as the reality of the Tent of Meeting, we are waiting for its ultimate consummation—the ultimate Tent of Meeting, the New Jerusalem—1 Tim. 3:15; Lev. 1:1; Heb. 11:9-10; Rev. 21:2-3.

- D. Abraham had his failures, and there was the forsaking of the altar and the tent; however, with him there was a recovery, and recovery is a matter of returning to the altar and the tent with calling on the name of the Lord—Gen. 12:9-10; 13:3-4; Rom. 10:12-13; 12:1-2:
  1. Eventually, at Hebron Abraham’s tent became a place where he had fellowship with God and where God could fellowship with him—Gen. 13:18.
  2. At Hebron God was revealed to Abraham as the God with His human friendship so that He might gain Abraham to be His intercessor for the rescue of His backslidden believer, for the bringing forth of Christ, and for the destruction of the works of the devil in His chosen people—James 2:23; 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; Gen. 18; 1 John 5:16a; Gal. 4:19; 1 John 3:8.

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

- A. Lot made the mistake of separating himself from Abraham and moving his tent as far as Sodom (Gen. 13:5-12); “now the men of Sodom were very wicked and sinful toward Jehovah” (v. 13).
- B. To leave Abraham was to leave God’s goal and God’s protection (Phil. 3:17; 1 Cor. 4:16-17; Heb. 13:7); we need to join ourselves to and follow the proper persons in God’s economy so that we may be kept in the line of life and the flow of the Lord’s move (1 Cor. 15:33; Prov. 13:20; 2 Tim. 1:15-18; 2:22).
- C. Because the land around Sodom was rich, Lot journeyed toward Sodom; eventually, he moved into the city, lived there, and settled there; under God’s sovereignty Sodom was conquered, and Lot was taken captive—Gen. 14:12; cf. Jer. 2:13.
- D. Abraham did not count the weak point of his brother and did not take pleasure in Lot’s suffering and calamity; as far as Abraham was concerned, it was a shame for him to see that his brother had been captured—1 John 5:16a; Prov. 10:12; James 5:19-20.
- E. When Abraham received the information about Lot’s capture, he made a strong decision to fight for Lot, and he prayed, lifting up his hand to Jehovah, God the Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth—Gen. 14:14, 22; 1 Tim. 2:8.
- F. Abraham decided to take his three hundred eighteen men and fight against the four kings and their armies due to the fact that behind the scene, Melchizedek (meaning “king of righteousness”), king of Salem (meaning “peace”), was interceding for Lot, Abraham, and Abraham’s fighting—Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:1-4, 25-26; 4:14-16; Rom. 8:26-29, 34.
- G. Melchizedek is a type of Christ as the kingly High Priest in His heavenly ministry, who is continually interceding for us and for those under our care to save us to the uttermost—Heb. 5:6, 10; 7:1-3, 25.
- H. The apostolic ministry in cooperation with Christ’s heavenly ministry fights for the brother by interceding for the saints according to God and His economy and by ministering the processed God into the saints for their overcoming supply and enjoyment—v. 25; 8:2; Luke 22:31-32; John 21:15-17; Acts 6:4; Rev. 1:12-13; cf. Exo. 28:9-12, 15-21, 29-30:
  1. We must be those who shepherd others according to God (1 Pet. 5:1-2), that is, according to what God is in His attributes, such as love, light, holiness, and righteousness.
  2. The elders need to realize that in their shepherding, they have to cover others’ sins, to not take account of others’ evils; whoever uncovers the defects, shortcomings, and sins of the members of the church is disqualified from the eldership.
  3. If the co-workers and elders do not love the bad ones, eventually they will have nothing to do; the Lord Jesus said that He came as a Physician, not for the healthy ones but for the sick ones—Matt. 9:12; John 8:7-11; Matt. 27:38; Luke 23:42-43; 15:1; Matt. 9:10; 19:13-15.

4. We must follow the footsteps of the processed Triune God in seeking and gaining the fallen people—Luke 15:2-10, 17-18, 20.
5. When we visit people, we must have the Lord's presence, and His presence is the charming factor; if we are crucified persons in resurrection, the Triune God's presence goes with us wherever we go, and people will be attracted to the Lord.
6. To shepherd people, we must cherish them, which is to make them happy and to make them feel pleasant and comfortable; we must have a pleasant countenance when we contact people, not a cheerless countenance—Psa. 42:5, 11.
7. In shepherding people, we must also feed them with the all-inclusive Christ in His full ministry of three stages—incarnation, inclusion, and intensification; in order to nourish people with Christ, we first have to seek Christ, gain Christ, enjoy Christ, and participate in Christ—John 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rev. 4:5; 5:6; Phil. 3:8-14.
8. For eternity the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd us and guide us to springs of waters of life; when we are one with Him as the great Shepherd of the sheep to shepherd others, we are doing the work of eternity—Rev. 7:17.