

THE PERFECTING TRAINING ON ORGANIC SHEPHERDING

Feb 28th 2007

Message Three

Learning the Lesson of Faith

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 5:7; 1 Thes. 1:3; Mark 11:22, 24;
Eph. 3:20; 2 Cor. 1:20, 4:13; Heb. 3:12; 2 Tim. 1:7; Judg. 5:15b-16; Dan. 11:32; Josh 1:6-9

- I. The principle of both the spiritual life and the spiritual work is the principle of faith, not of sight or appearance— 2 Cor. 5:7:**
- A. God's New Testament economy is by faith and this faith is based upon the divine facts that have been accomplished—1 Tim. 1:4.
 - B. This kind of faith is not a mere doctrinal faith; it is a living faith that comes from the Word with the Spirit— Rom. 10:17; Eph 2:8.
 - C. Faith is a “cashing in”, the “utilization” or “management” of the inheritance— Heb 11:1.
- II. First Thessalonians says that our work must be of faith— 1 Thes. 1:3:**
- A. Faith in God and in His power— Mark 11:22-24.
 - B. Faith in God's Spirit and in His word— Eph. 3:21; 2 Cor. 1:20.
 - C. Not in our ability, method, nor in anything else— 2 Cor. 1:9; Phil.3:23.
 - D. The work of faith is the foundation of our Christian service— 1 Thes. 1:8.
- III. Our experience of Christ is by faith, not by sight— 2 Cor. 5:7:**
- A. "For we walk by faith, not by appearance," – 2 Cor. 5:7, 4:18.
 - B. Our experience of Christ is by faith—Eph. 3:17.
 - C. We should believe without any feeling or natural seeing— 2 Cor. 4:18.
- IV. The spirit of faith in 2 Cor. 4:13 is contrary to the evil heart of unbelief— 2 Cor. 4:13; Heb. 3:12:**
- A. The spirit of faith in 4:13 is our spirit mingled with the Holy Spirit. We must exercise such a spirit to believe and speak, as the psalmist did – Psa. 116:10.
 - B. Hebrews 3 tells us that this is an evil heart of unbelief. It is a heart occupied by the evil one; so it is called an evil heart— Heb. 3:12.
 - C. We can pray with living faith to command the Lord— Isa. 45:11.
- V. Doubts are in our mind, but faith is in our spirit— 2 Cor. 4:13; Jam. 1:6, 7.**
- A. Doubts are in our mind, but faith is in our spirit— Gen. 3:1-5.
 - B. The praying one could have faith in God without doubting—Mark 11:24
 - C. The shield of faith quenches all the flaming darts of the evil one; most of these darts are doubts—Eph. 6:16.
 - D. Our walk is based on spiritual facts. We must forget how we feel. We must live above the doubting clouds, not below them— 2 Cor. 1:8-10; Jer. 17:7-8.
- VI. God does not give us a spirit of cowardice, but a spirit of power Neh.1:4-6, 2:3-5; Matt. 8:26; 2 Tim. 1:6-7; Num. 13:30, 33; Josh 1:6-9:**
- A. All who have been used by God through history have been aggressive persons— Neh. 1:4-6, 2:3-5.
 - B. It is the aggressive ones who have received help from God— Neh. 2:6-8.
 - C. God does not give us a spirit of cowardice, but a spirit of power— 2 Tim 1:7; John 14:27.
 - 1. He has not given us a weak, “wishy-washy” spirit.
 - 2. We need to have a bold spirit, not a timid spirit.
- VII. “... Among the divisions of Reuben There were great resolutions in heart. Why did you sit among the sheepfolds Listening to the pipings for the flocks? In the divisions of Reuben There were great searchings of heart.” – Judg. 5:15b-16:**

- A. They didn't sit among the sheepfolds, Listening to the pipings for the flocks—Judg. 5:16.
- B. They have great resolutions in heart and great searchings of heart – Judg. 5:15-16,31.
- C. "... But the people who know their God will show strength and take action."—Dan. 11:32b.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

GOD'S NEW TESTAMENT ECONOMY IS BY FAITH, NOT BY APPEARANCE

First Timothy 1:4 speaks of "God's dispensation [economy] which is in faith." God's New Testament economy is altogether in faith. The divine facts in God's economy are great and real, but they require our faith. God has accomplished everything necessary for the dispensing of the divine Trinity into His chosen people. The only requirement now is that we exercise our faith to enjoy this dispensing. The dispensing of the divine Trinity may be illustrated by the flow of water in the water pipes in our homes. The water is always there, but how much the water flows depends on how much we turn on the faucets. The dispensing of the divine Trinity is a fact and a reality, but we must exercise our faith to say "amen" to this fact. We need to "turn on the faucet" by saying "amen" to the divine fact and enjoying the divine dispensing.

God's New Testament economy is by faith, not by appearance, and this faith is based upon the divine facts that have been accomplished. However, many of the facts in the Bible are not presented in a plain and simple way, and there are many items, especially in the New Testament, that are difficult to explain. As a result, many times we do not stand with the divine facts but prefer to exercise our feeling and natural concepts. Nevertheless, what we preach as the glad tidings, the good news, is that God has accomplished everything needed for His economy. In the Gospels the Lord said, "All things are ready; come to the marriage feast" (Matt. 22:4; Luke 14:17). The feast of God's economy is already "cooked." We should simply come and enjoy it. (*Messages to the Trainees in Fall 1990*, p. 85)

A LIVING FAITH THAT COMES FROM THE WORD WITH THE SPIRIT

When faith rises up, the Spirit is present also. We cannot separate faith from the Spirit. Actually, faith is a function of the Spirit. When we read the Word in a proper way and the Word is infused into us, it becomes the Spirit. Then the Spirit functions to produce faith. Faith, therefore, is the result of the function of the Spirit.

The Spirit enters into our being, especially into our spirit, through the Word. We may even say that the Spirit comes in as the Word. When we handle the Word of God rightly, the Word will enter into us and become the Spirit functioning in us to give us faith. Then in our experience we shall have the hearing of the Word, the believing in Christ, and the receiving of the Spirit.

Preachers of the gospel often use Ephesians 2:5 and 8 to tell people that we are saved by grace through faith. But many who use these verses in preaching the gospel may not realize that the faith through which we are saved comes from the Word with the Spirit. Saving faith is produced by the infusion of the living Word with the Spirit. This kind of faith is not a mere doctrinal faith; it is a living faith that comes from the Word with the Spirit. (*Secret of Experiencing Christ, The*, pp. 104-105)

FACT, FAITH AND EXPERIENCE

God has accomplished everything for man. Since everything has been accomplished, certain "facts" exist. And since they are existing "facts," man does not have to accomplish what has already been accomplished. All of God's works are complete.

However, God's grace is a righteous grace. This is why, with the "facts," there is still the need for human cooperation. What kind of cooperation is this? It is not to add anything to what He has finished, but to have man acknowledge that what God has done is real. This is faith.

Faith is to acknowledge that what God has said and done is true. Faith is to accept the facts, that is, to acknowledge them as facts.

Faith is a “cashing in.” I use the words “cashing in” in the sense of one cashing a check at the bank. Suppose someone gives you a check. That the bank has the money is a fact. For you to cash the check for money is to acknowledge the fact that the bank possesses whatever amount is written on the check. It takes faith to “cash in.” With faith, one can cash in and thereby have the money to use. Now, to spend the money is the “experience.” To have the money in the bank is the “fact,” to cash the check is “faith,” and to spend the money is “experience.” In God’s grace, what He has done for man are facts. But man must still experience these facts.

To experience God’s grace is to claim by faith the facts that God has accomplished for man. These facts are accomplished by God. What man needs is faith. The facts belong to God, and the experience belongs to man. Thus, faith is God’s facts becoming man’s experience. What the Bible shows us is simply “fact, faith, and experience.”(*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Vol. 1, pp. 53-54)

OUR WORK MUST BE OF FAITH

We have to learn to take action, to work, to labor, in faith, not by our feelings. When we make a resolution to visit people, we may begin to feel down. This is a common thing. We should still labor regardless of our feelings. First Thessalonians says that our work must be of faith. Faith means not doing anything in yourself, not doing anything by yourself, and not doing anything according to your feeling. We should not be people who take action just when we are feeling very good and very high. We need to take action in faith regardless of how we feel.(*Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups, The*, pp. 105-106)

THE SPIRIT OF FAITH

Second Corinthians 4:13 says, “And having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed, therefore I spoke; we also believe, therefore also we speak.” The spirit here is the mingled spirit, the divine Spirit mingled with the regenerated human spirit.

In their comments on this verse, both Alford and Vincent spoke concerning the mingled spirit, but their speaking was somewhat vague. Alford said, “Not distinctly the Holy Spirit,—but still not merely a human disposition: the indwelling Holy Spirit penetrates and characterizes the whole renewed man.” On the one hand, Alford speaks of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, he indicates that something human, signified by the word disposition, is also involved. Actually, what Alford was referring to was the human spirit. Vincent says, “Spirit of faith: not distinctly the Holy Spirit, nor, on the other hand, a human faculty or disposition, but blending both.” Vincent’s remarks are an improvement upon those of Alford. The word faculty is certainly an improvement over disposition. Furthermore, Vincent speaks of a blending of the Spirit with a particular human faculty. This blending is actually the mingling of the Holy Spirit with our human spirit. (*Life-Study of 2 Corinthians*. pp. 302-303)

PRAYING WITH LIVING FAITH TO COMMAND THE LORD

First of all, we must trust in the Lord. We cannot do anything independently from the Lord. When we prepare to invite people, we must have adequate prayer about it. We need to pray to seek the Lord’s mind concerning whom we contact. Then we must pray for the persons who we feel it is of the Lord that we invite them. We must remember them, bringing their names to the Lord day and night. We need to pray in a prevailing way. Isaiah 45:11 says, “Thus says Jehovah, / The Holy One of Israel and the One who formed him, / Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons, / And concerning the work of My hands, command Me.” In this verse the Lord gives us the ground to command Him. In a sense, He says, “I am your Servant. Give Me the order.” We must learn to pray in this way, saying, “Lord, while I am here remaining with You and looking to You, I tell You that You have to do something.”

There is the mysterious principle of faith in the universe. Faith honors the Lord, so the Lord always honors faith. To not have a living, prevailing, and powerful faith means that either we depend on ourselves or that we have an evil heart of unbelief. However, if we would not trust in and depend on ourselves, and if we believe, we will have the living faith to claim something, to command the Lord to do something. To command the Lord to

do something means that we do not trust in ourselves and that we believe; the Lord will honor this faith. We need to pray in this way. All kinds of doubts come from the enemy. We must learn to believe and exercise a living faith. (*Preaching the Gospel in the Way of Life*, pp. 35-36)

THE PRAYING ONE COULD HAVE FAITH IN GOD WITHOUT DOUBTING

Thus, the praying one could have faith in God without doubting, but believing that he had received what he asked for, he would have it (Mark 11: 24). The praying one is now one with God, in union with God. He is mingled with God, so God becomes his faith. This is what it means to have faith in God, according to the Lord's word in Mark 11:22. The praying one is absolutely one with God, and God becomes his faith.

In Mark 11:24 the Lord said, "All things that you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and you will have them." I would like to present one testimony concerning the experience of this verse. It is concerning the Lord's move to Russia. Soon after the United States defeated Iraq in 1991, one day a thought came to me: "Why don't you go to Russia? Now is the time." When I fellowshiped with the leading co-workers about this, they all agreed with me, so we announced to the saints that we would follow the Lord's leading to go to Russia. Right away there was a response from the Body for this move of the Lord. This is a testimony that I had the full faith that we received a success. (*The God-man Living*, p. 146)

THE AGGRESSIVENESS OF NEHEMIAH IN VOLUNTEERING HIMSELF TO HIS BURDEN

All who have been used by God through history have been aggressive persons. For example, both Paul and Martin Luther were very aggressive. Brother Nee also, even though he was a gentleman, was very aggressive.

Nehemiah surely was an aggressive person. He volunteered himself, in a sense, not to God but to his burden. He had a burden to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. His aggressiveness was very much used by God.

In the Lord's recovery today there are many good saints, but we are short of aggressiveness. If just five thousand among us were aggressive, the world would be turned upside down. If there were seven hundred aggressive ones in each continent, a great deal would issue forth for the carrying out of God's economy.

In our reading of the book of Nehemiah, we need to pay attention to Nehemiah's aggressiveness. Although he was a common man, a servant of the king, he was aggressive to volunteer himself to God and to his burden concerning the building up of the city. He was also aggressive in making his requests known to the king. When the king asked him about his sad face, he spoke to the king in a bold, aggressive way about his burden for the city of Jerusalem. It is important that we see this in the Word. (*Life-Study of Nehemiah*, p. 12)

GOD DOES NOT GIVE US A SPIRIT OF COWARDICE, BUT A SPIRIT OF POWER

Paul wrote 2 Timothy 1:6-7 according to his experience. He reminded Timothy to fan into flame the gift of God within him. Then he said that God has not given us a spirit of cowardice. Instead, God has given us a spirit in the center of our being surrounded by the three parts of the soul—the will, the emotion, and the mind. The spirit given to us by God is of power, of love, and of sobermindedness. Power belongs to our will. Love belongs to our emotion. Sobermindedness belongs to our mind. God has given us a spirit of these three things. Our will should be strong, full of power; our emotion should be loving, full of love; and our mind should be sober, full of sobermindedness.

According to the divine revelation, God does not give us a spirit of cowardice, but a spirit of power. That means your spirit is connected to your will, which is powerful. So whenever you exercise your spirit, you have to realize that your will is involved. Our spirit is surrounded not only by the powerful will but also by the loving emotion and by the sober mind. That means your mind should not be cloudy or foggy, but very clear, very sober. (*The Spirit with our Spirit*, p. 82)