

GOD'S ECONOMY IN FIATH, Week 4**Running the Christian Race So That We May Obtain the Prize
by Looking Away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of Our Faith**

Scripture Reading: Heb. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:13-14; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; Rom. 12:3; S. S. 1:4; Jer. 31:3

Hebrews 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,
Hebrews 12:2	Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.
1 Corinthians 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.
Philippians 3:13	Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,
Philippians 3:14	I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.
2 Timothy 4:7	I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.
2 Timothy 4:8	Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing.
Romans 12:3	For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith.
Song of Songs 1:4	Draw me; we will run after you — The king has brought me into his chambers — / We will be glad and rejoice in you; / We will extol your love more than wine. / Rightly do they love you.
Jeremiah 31:3	Jehovah appeared to me from afar, saying, / Indeed I have loved you with an eternal love; / Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.

Day 1

Hebrews 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,
Exodus 13:21	And Jehovah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them on the way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might go by day and by night.

- I. “Therefore let us also, having so great a **cloud of witnesses surrounding us**, put away every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us and **run with endurance the race which is set before us**”—Heb. 12:1:
- A. The **cloud** is for **leading people to follow the Lord** (Num. 9:15-22), and the Lord is in the cloud to be with the people (Exo. 13:21-22); in Greek witnesses implies the sense of martyrs (Acts 1:8):
1. With the people of faith, we can have the Lord's presence and His leading; all the people of faith, the church people, are the cloud; the **best way to seek the Lord's presence is to come to the church**.

2. If anyone is seeking the Lord's leading, he must **follow the cloud**, the church; the Lord is in the cloud, meaning that **He is with the people of faith**.
3. Since we are the people of faith, **we are today's cloud**, and people can follow the Lord by following us; **those who seek Him can find His presence with us**—cf. 1 Cor. 14:24-25; Psa. 36:8-9; 16:11.

Day 2

Hebrews 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,
1 Corinthians 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.
2 Thessalonians 3:5	And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the endurance of Christ.

- B. The **Christian life is a race**; every saved Christian must run the race to win the prize (1 Cor. 9:24); the prize is not salvation in the common sense (Eph. 2:8; 1 Cor. 3:15) but a reward in a special sense (Heb. 10:35; 1 Cor. 3:14); the apostle Paul ran the race and won the prize (9:26-27; Phil. 3:13-14; 2 Tim. 4:7-8):
 1. An **encumbrance** is a weight, **burden**, or **impediment**; the runners of the race strip off every unnecessary weight, every encumbering burden, that nothing may impede them from winning the race.
 2. The unique entangling sin in this context was the **willful sin of forsaking** the assembling together with the saints, of giving up the new covenant way in God's economy, and of going back to Judaism (Heb. 10:26); both the **encumbering weight and the entangling sin** would have frustrated the Hebrew believers and restrained them from running the heavenly race in the new covenant way of following Jesus.
- C. We need to **run with endurance**, asking the Lord to direct our hearts into the love of God and into the endurance of Christ—2 Thes. 3:5:
 1. This love is **our love toward God**, issuing from the love of God (1 John 4:19) that has been poured out in our hearts (Rom. 5:5).
 2. This endurance is to **endure with the endurance of Christ** that we have enjoyed and experienced—cf. Rev. 1:9.

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. This prize is not salvation in a common sense, 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 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. (*Life-Study of Hebrews, chapter 50*)

Day 3

- Hebrews 12:2** Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfector 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.
- Ephesians 2:8** For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.

III. “Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God”—Heb. 12:2:

- A. We can live the Christian life, run the Christian race, by **looking away unto Jesus with undivided attention** by turning away from every other object:
1. The wonderful Jesus, who is enthroned in heaven and crowned with glory and honor (2:9), is the greatest attraction in the universe.
 2. He is like an immense magnet drawing all His seekers to Him—S. S. 1:4; Hosea 11:4; Jer. 31:3.
 3. It is by being attracted by His **charming beauty** (loveliness, pleasantness, delightfulness) that we **look away from all things other than Him**—Psa. 27:4.
 4. Without such a charming object, how could we look away from so many distracting things on earth?
- B. Jesus is the Author of faith, the Originator, the Inaugurator, the source, and the cause of faith; in our natural man we have no believing ability, but when we look away unto Jesus, He as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) **transfuses us with Himself, with His believing element**.
- C. Then, spontaneously, a kind of believing arises in our being, and we have the faith to believe in Him; **this faith is not of ourselves but of Him who imparts Himself as the believing element** into us that He may believe for us.

Day 4

- 2 Peter 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:
- Galatians 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.

- D. 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**.
- E. Thus, it is not we who believe; **it is He who believes within us**; in this way He makes us a believing being (cf. Acts 6:5; 11:22-24a); apparently it is our believing, but actually it is His believing; this is genuine faith.
- F. **Faith is a substantiating ability**, a sixth sense, the sense by which we substantiate, give substance to, the things unseen or hoped for—Heb. 11:1:
1. Substantiating is the ability that enables us to realize a substance.
 2. The function of our five senses is to substantiate the things of the outside world, transferring all the objective items into us to become our subjective experience.
 3. As the eye is to seeing, the ear to hearing, and the nose to smelling, so **faith**, our spirit of faith, is the organ whereby we **substantiate everything in the unseen spiritual world into us**—2 Cor. 4:13.

4. In the divine and mystical realm of the consummated Spirit, we can exercise our spirit of faith with the spiritual senses of seeing the Lord (Eph. 1:18; Matt. 5:8; Job 42:5), hearing Him (Gal. 3:2; Rev. 2:7a), touching Him (Matt. 9:21; 14:36; John 4:24), tasting Him (Psa. 34:8; 1 Pet. 2:2-3), and smelling Him, being permeated with Him to such an extent that we become “a fragrance of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:15), with our Christian walk in love being a sweet-smelling savor to God (Eph. 5:2); furthermore, as His loving seekers, we eventually become mature in life to the extent that we have a spiritual intuition and olfactory sense of high and sharp discernment in order to discern the things that are of God and are not of God (S. S. 7:4b; Phil. 1:9).

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.

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**. (*Life-Study of Hebrews, chapter 49*)

Day 5

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

Romans 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? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly await it through endurance.

G. Faith, as the substantiation of things hoped for, assures and convinces us of things not seen; therefore, **faith is the evidence, the proof, of things unseen**—Heb. 11:1:

1. “We were saved in hope. But a hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, **we eagerly await it through endurance**”—Rom. 8:24-25.
2. Our life should be a life of hope, which accompanies and abides with faith (1 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 13:13); we should be those who “walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham” (Rom. 4:12), who “beyond hope believed in hope” (v. 18).
3. We need to **exercise our spirit of faith** in order to walk by faith and not by that which is seen (2 Cor. 4:13; 5:7); we do not regard, look at, “the things which are seen but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (4:18).
4. The **Christian life is a life of things unseen**; the degradation of the church is the degradation from unseen things to seen things—Heb. 11:27; 1 Pet. 1:8; Gal. 6:10.
5. The Lord's recovery is to **recover His church** from things seen to things unseen.

Day 6

Hebrews 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.

Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little inferior to the angels because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of everything.

H. Jesus is the **Perfecter**, the **Finisher**, the **Completer**, of our faith—Heb. 12:2a:

1. As we look away unto Him continually, **He will finish and complete the faith that we need for the running of the heavenly race**—v. 1.
2. We all have the same faith in quality, but the quantity of faith we **have depends upon how much we contact the living God** so that we may have Him increased in us—Rom. 12:3:
 - a. Faith in the progressing stage comes through our contacting the Triune God, who is faith in us—1 Thes. 5:17.
 - b. The way to receive such a faith is to contact its source, the Lord, the processed and consummated God, by **calling on Him, praying to Him, and pray-reading His word**—Heb. 4:16; Rom. 10:12; 2 Tim. 2:22; Eph. 6:17-18; Heb. 4:2.
 - c. When we contact Him, He is overflowing within us, and there is a mutuality of faith among us; **we are encouraged through the faith that is in one another**—Rom. 1:12; Philem. 6.
3. Our regenerated spirit, **our spirit of faith, is the victory** that overcomes the Satan-organized-and-usurped world—1 John 5:4; John 3:6; 2 Cor. 4:13; 1 John 5:18.
4. The great irrepressible and unlimited power of faith motivates thousands to suffer for the Lord, risk their lives, and become overcoming sent ones and martyrs for the carrying out of God's eternal economy, which is in faith—Luke 18:8; Phil. 2:30; Rom. 16:3-4; Acts 20:24; 1 Tim. 1:4; Heb. 12:3; cf. Judg. 8:4.

I. According to Hebrews 12:2, for the joy set before Him, Jesus “**endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God**”:

1. The Lord Jesus knew that through His death He would be glorified in resurrection (Luke 24:25-26) and that His divine life would be released to produce many brothers for His expression (John 12:23-24; Rom. 8:29); for the joy set before Him (John 16:20-22), **He despised the shame and volunteered** to be delivered to the Satan-usurped leaders of the Jews and Gentiles and to be condemned by them to death.
2. Therefore, **God highly exalted Him to the heavens, seated Him at His right hand** (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33-35), bestowed on Him the name which is above every name (Phil. 2:9-10), made Him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36), and crowned Him with glory and honor (Heb. 2:9).
3. If we look away unto Him as such a wonderful and all-inclusive One, **He will minister Himself as heaven, life, and strength into us, transfusing and infusing us with all that He is**, so that we may be able to run the heavenly race and live the heavenly life on earth; in this way He will carry us through all the lifelong pathway of faith and lead and bring us into glory—2 Cor. 3:16, 18; 1 Pet. 5:4; 2 Tim. 4:8.

Once such faith is generated within us, it can never be removed from us. Even if we try to deny the Lord, we ultimately find ourselves unable to do so, for Christ as faith has been infused into our being. For example, on the night that the Lord Jesus was arrested by the Jews, Peter denied Him three times in His presence. However, Christ as the believing element and ability was still in Peter. As the Lord petitioned, his faith ultimately did not fail. We may have similar experiences of denying the Lord temporarily. At times we may be swayed by our human feeling and understanding and deny the Lord temporarily. Yet while we are denying Him, nevertheless there **remains the believing element and ability deep within us**, which nothing and no one can remove. This is **Christ Himself infused into us as precious faith**. All the believers, from the greatest to the least, have such a faith. This faith, which is precious to us and common to all the believers, is the base of all spiritual blessings. It is upon this base that we have been blessed and have received all the spiritual, divine, and heavenly things prepared by God.

Faith is simply the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not only the **Author**, the **Originator**, of faith but also the **Perfecter**, the **Finisher**, of faith. He will finish what He originated; He will complete what He inaugurated. If we look to Him continually, He will finish and complete the faith that we need for the running of the heavenly race. Once Christ has originated this faith within us, He will never let it go. Rather, He will complete, finish, and perfect it. As the Completer of faith, **He is continually infused into us as the believing element and ability** when we pray to the Lord, fellowship with Him, pray over the Bible, attend church meetings, listen to spiritual messages, and read spiritual books. Hence, our faith in Jesus Christ comes from Him; in fact, it is **Christ Himself continually infused into us**. Such faith brings us into an organic union with Christ; it also continually increases this organic union. The increase of our organic union with Him is the increase, the growth, of Christ within us. The more Christ is infused into us as the believing element and ability, the more He is growing in us. This is our faith being perfected by the Lord. In this sense, our faith has not yet been fully perfected. Day by day our faith will be under the Lord's perfecting until we meet Him on the day of rapture. For this reason, Paul calls Him the Author and Perfecter of our faith. **We need to pursue the Lord to experience and enjoy Him in this aspect day by day and even moment by moment.** (*The Conclusion of the New Testament: Experiencing, Enjoying, and Expressing Christ, Volume 2, chapter 58*)