

WCCC 2024

Brother Godwin Sun

Those who run the heavenly race (3)

Each time we come to the last message of the series, we usually confess that time has flown by quickly. But today I am willing to say that time waits for no one, so we must be alert. Let us turn to the Word of God.

"Let us also therefore, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, laying aside every weight, and sin which so easily entangles us, run with endurance the race that lies before us, looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith:"
Hebrews 12:1-2a DARBY

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,"
Hebrews 3:1a DARBY

"And these all, having obtained witness through faith, did not receive the promise, God having foreseen some better thing for us, that they should not be made perfect without us."
Hebrews 11:39-40 DARBY

"Whether as regards Titus, he is my companion and fellow-labourer in your behalf; or our brethren, they are deputed messengers of assemblies, Christ's glory. Shew therefore to them, before the assemblies, the proof of your love, and of our boasting about you."
2 Corinthians 8:23-24 DARBY

"Did I make gain of you by any of those whom I have sent to you? I begged Titus, and sent the brother with him: did Titus at all make gain of you? have we not walked in the same spirit? have we not in the same steps?"
2 Corinthians 12:17-18 DARBY

"If therefore thou holdest me to be a partner with thee, receive him as me;"
Philemon 1:17 DARBY

"For to this have ye been called; for Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you a model that ye should follow in his steps:"
1 Peter 2:21 DARBY

"For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form, taking his place in the likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross."

Philippians 2:5-8 DARBY

"And it shall come to pass in the end of days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and Jehovah's word from Jerusalem."

Isaiah 2:2-3 DARBY

When we began we shared with brothers and sisters that this would be our 38th year at WCCC. When I mentioned these 38 years, I have a sentiment in my heart. I remember in 1985, I invited brother Kaung to come to the West Coast so we could have this conference. We prayed for a month, and he agreed to come. Therefore, in 1986, we began the West Coast Christian Conference. It has been 38 years.

We know that in the scriptures, the number 38 is quite meaningful. Brothers and sisters, do you recall when Moses brought the people of Israel to Mount Sinai, and after a brief stop there, the Lord would lead them into Canaan? When they were in the wilderness at Kadesh Barnea, right at border of the land of Canaan, they sent 12 spies into Canaan. When they returned, two of them carried a large cluster of grapes and the spies reported that it was indeed a beautiful land. But 10 of the spies gave an evil report, saying that although the land is beautiful, there were great and mighty enemies in the land, and that if they went in, they would all be their food.

Caleb and Joshua, however, encouraged the people, saying that "God is with us, we can enter into the land." The people got angry and wanted to stone them. The people wept and shouted, complaining to Moses that he had led them into the enemies' land to kill them. We know that this provoked God's wrath. God wanted to lead the people in, but seeing that they lacked faith, it was at Kadesh Barnea that God turned their path. And the people would wander in the wilderness for 38 years.

After 38 years, they again arrived at this place Kadesh Barnea. At this time Joshua led them across the river Jordan, and they would enter into the beautiful land of Canaan.

I am not being prophetic here, but I do have this sentiment that 38 years have passed. We desire that the Lord may return even next year, and we no longer need to meet in this way. We would all be gathering before the throne of our Lord. May the Lord give us such a deep desire and longing in our hearts. I feel more and more that the condition we have in this world can be made perfected when our Lord returns. May the Lord shorten these days. Let us pray urgently for His return.

This is the deep sentiment I have in my heart. Let us encourage each other.

Another thought I have is that we know how the Lord shows no partiality. This is very precious. When we read the scriptures we see clearly that after man fell, many inequalities arose in the natural world. We are each of us born into this world, some born rich and others poor. Some are

born well and others not so well. These inequalities are in the natural world, but in the spiritual world, all the saints saved by grace are dealt the same way by our Heavenly Father. It is all good.

God, through His own Son, has given us life. And this is the same life in each and every saint. So in the New Testament God tells us that He is not partial - He shows no favouritism. Even as He has so many children, He does not favor one over the other. You and I are the same - all under His grace and loved by Him. Regardless of who we are, God shows no partiality.

When we read Hebrews 11, the author shows us how all these individuals were blessed by God because of one reason: by faith. So today, as we come by faith, we can likely come to receive this grace upon us. In Hebrews 11, when the saints of old are mentioned, some have short and others have long accounts. Moses and Abraham have longer accounts in the chapter, not because God favors them more, but because God is able to express more of what is important in His heart to us. Therefore their stories are longer. It is not because they are special.

Later in the chapter, even Samuel and David have very short accounts. God shows us clearly that He is not partial to anyone. They are blessed by grace because of faith. Likewise, today we receive grace because of faith in God. God loves you and me the same way He loves David or Paul. Do you believe this? We have shared that there are no great men in the Lord. We have all fallen short. We are all sinners who have failed. Therefore we thank God.

In the New Testament, there are 5 mentions that God does not show favoritism. What great comfort it gives us! Many children of God think that when they are in heaven, they would look upon all these characters receiving their reward, and feel that it is impossible for themselves.

There was a story of Moody who had led countless people to the Lord through his preaching of the gospel. One night he had a dream where he arrived at heaven. On the table were a great number of crowns, large and small. He thought to himself that the big crown was for him. As the Lord gave out the crowns, what surprised him was that the big crowns went to 3 older sisters. Moody did not know them. Why did the 3 sisters receive the large crowns? Because whenever Moody preached, these 3 sisters would prostrate at the back of the stage, praying for Moody and the meeting. Moody awoke, and from that day forth, he was no longer proud or dared think highly of himself.

Brothers and sisters, we have reason to believe that when we enter into the kingdom, perhaps many brothers and sisters who follow the Lord in secret receive their reward; while many famous Christians may not receive their reward, or even be scolded by the Lord. May these stories receive encouragement.

I have often shared that I am just an ordinary man. I like to read the story of the ordinary people in the Bible, because it encourages me. Whenever we read the great people like Moses, we feel that there is no hope for us.

Everyone is an ordinary person before the Lord. The author of Hebrews highlights this. These individuals received grace not because of their noble birth or high education; or how talented they are. It is only by grace. We must comprehend this. This is the only reason. Today when we live by faith before God, we likewise receive grace from the Lord. He is not partial to anyone.

We have shared that faith is a spiritual seeing. So we must have this desire. No matter how much spiritual knowledge we may have, may we be like Paul who although had received such great spiritual revelation, says that there is still much he does not know. May we not think that we have read so much of the Bible, and have an abundance of spiritual knowledge. May we come humbly before our Lord and say "Lord, we are blind. We need you to clear our eyes that we may see what you desire us to see today."

So Paul writes of how he forgets what lies behind. The grace of God is so abundant! May we not be idle in the way of the Lord. This spiritual seeing allows us to see that which is unseen. That which is unseen is Christ. So Paul desires to gain even more, that he may one day obtain the prize of the high calling of God.

We have shared that we can turn that around, and it would still be right: that the Lord would open our eyes so we have this spiritual seeing; and as such we have faith. So the author of the Hebrews emphasizes "by faith, by faith, by faith." This spiritual seeing also produces faith in us. Because their inner eyes are open, and they have such faith, they run this way that is different from that of the world. No longer do they run an earthly path. They run a heavenly way.

Brothers and sisters, we know that as we run this heavenly way, there will be a cost. It is a difficult way. Our brother Dana shared on the reproaches of Christ. When you are on this way, be prepared to be reproached.

The Lord shows us that we are not running this way alone. We need companions. In the Old Testament, we see the history of the forefathers, and how they ran a lonely way. There were no companions for Enoch. In Abraham's time, he went to Canaan. He brought Lot along. But Lot not long gave no help, Lot brought Abraham more hardship and lessons to learn.

Brothers and sisters, we need spiritual companionship. In Hebrews 3, we see "Holy brethren, we are partakers of the heavenly calling." This calling is for every saint. God has already separated us from this world. We now belong to the heavenly, and we ought to run the heavenly way. This is very important. The scripture places all these individuals before us to encourage us. That they have run the heavenly way, and so must we.

We must have such faith. We look to His grace. If the calling of the Lord comes to us today, we must rise up and run.

In the New Testament, God gives us great encouragement. In Philippians, Paul writes about running on this heavenly way. First, he ran for his own sake. We must obtain that which we were obtained for. Secondly, we must run for His will, that He may gain that which He gained us for. When we strive diligently towards the purpose of God, we will gain that which we ought to receive. When we obtain His will, God will also take possession of us. How precious this is!

Brothers and sisters, may the Lord cause us to hear this heavenly calling!

In early church history, before Paul, we see a group of saints already running this heavenly way. When Paul persecuted the church, he persecuted those of "the way". There was this group of people who focused on the way of the Lord. They followed the Lord, as Stephen did. Their eyes

were opened. They knew they could no longer be in Judaism. They rose up and ran a different way from the Judaizers. They invoked the hatred of Paul, and Paul especially persecuted them.

In the Bible, they are known as “people of the way”. Today the Lord calls us. May we too be people of the way. As Paul persecuted so zealously the people of the way, he chased them from Jerusalem all the way to the other cities. He even wanted to find them in Damascus, a seven-day journey.

Today, when we hate someone, if we had to chase them for seven days, would we? We would only if we hated them to a great degree. Paul chased them so zealously. He regretted this greatly, seeing that he was the chief of sinners who was blind and persecuted the Lord Jesus and harmed His church. He was foolish and only had religious zeal.

We thank the Lord for His mercy. On the way to Damascus a bright light shone on Paul and he fell down. And he became a person of the way. Where once he chased others, now he was the one being chased. The Jews persecuted him greatly. Remember how 40 people fasted and vowed to kill him.

This is how difficult this way is. Just as how Jesus brought the will of heaven to earth, and went against the tradition of the Jews, and faced the most feared words, “crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

For us to run this way today, we must be prepared to pay the price. Anyone who is on this way will hear the devil whispering “crucify him!”. But this is a price worthy of us to pay. We thank the Lord that not only did Paul not regret his choice, he has become a wonderful example for us. After so many years of running this way, he has become a great athlete. He tells us of his experience in Philippians 3. Were it not for this chapter, we would not know why we are running. Paul tells us that we would not live in vain when we run in this way. We run this way to be worthy of our Lord. How shall we run? We press on forward, forgetting what lies behind, unto the goal. Only when we run this way will we receive the prize of His high calling.

We thank the Lord that when we read the book of Acts, we see how Paul runs diligently, striving forward. And how through his service, he encourages so many. Even through the hardship and opposition, being thrown in prison and being stoned, many have been quickened to serve the Lord. Paul gained many companions along the way. Paul mentions many individuals in his letters. We see in Acts that Paul is surrounded by many brothers and sisters. Like Aquila and Priscilla, Timothy and Philemon. When we read Romans 16, there are over 30 names listed there. These are the ones who ran together with Paul. So Paul encourages others, and himself is cheered.

This is a lonely path. It is a blessing to have companions. Today, in the church, some brothers and sisters feel lonely, unable to find spiritual companions.

Forgive me for saying this. In 1973, the Lord brought me to Los Angeles. Before this I was in Taiwan, surrounded by many spiritual companions. We would often pray and fellowship together. It was so joyful to have fellowship in the Spirit.

When I came to the US, I became very lonely. I could not find anyone I could have fellowship with. It wasn't that there weren't brothers and sisters around me. But when I shared on spiritual

matters, there was no response. Even among co-workers, when we shared on spiritual matters, they said, "this is vain talk. It won't happen." I was greatly discouraged, unable to find anyone to fellowship with. It was a sorrowful time.

Thank the Lord that many years have passed and I see many individuals raised in the US. You sitting here have been risen by the Lord in these conditions. We must encourage one another. We must be spiritual companions, running together. In the days of the forefathers, they ran alone. We know that they are gathered today in the Lord's presence. There is a multitude who have ran this race.

Today, on this earth, we truly need companions to run together. We thank the Lord.

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul used Titus to help deliver the offerings of the brethren. We know that the Corinthian church was a difficult church. Paul served them for a long time. Many loved Paul, but also may opposed him. They objected to everything Paul did. When Paul sent Titus to them, they claimed that Paul was up to no good, and he wanted to trick them.

Paul says, "I have sent Titus to you. Did he make gain from you? Why do you treat him this way?" We thank the Lord that Paul shares here an important principle. This is a principle for true fellow laborers. We walk the same steps and have the same Spirit. We thank the Lord that out of this bad situation, Paul was inspired to speak some very important words.

Today, in order for us to run together in this heavenly way, we must have the same Spirit, and walk in step. We know this word "same" is very important. The meaning here is not about who follows whom, because we all have the same Spirit. As you take this step, I am also taking this step. So we are fellow laborers because we have the same experience.

This is not because Paul was trying to be humble, but because he knew the heart of the Lord. There is a central thought in Hebrews, that when the Lord Jesus became flesh, He was a partaker with His fellow brethren. He is the very Son of God, but when He came to this world, He was willing to be like us.

Who are we? Sometimes we seek to stand out from others. I remember one time a brother told me that he spoke with an elderly brother and said, "I respect you the same as I respect the others." And this elderly brother responded, "oh, now you treat me the same as everyone else?"

What kind of spirit is this? Paul did not have such intentions. Titus was much younger than Paul, and could be his son. But Paul viewed Titus as his fellow laborer. Paul saw Christ. He has received such great revelation and gifts, but never did he ever say he is higher than others.

This word "same" is very precious. In Christianity today, we like hierarchy and position. When we have fame and position, we stand out from others. Yet the Lord wanted to be the same as us. To be in the same Spirit and in the same step. If we are not in the same Spirit and step, we are not fellow laborers. It is because we have the same Spirit and step that we serve the Lord together.

Sometimes I feel this regret that we have too many different things in Christianity. There are so many organizations and so many different works, causing differences among brothers and

sisters. Some say, "when I serve in the church, it feels like I am working in the office." But in the office, there are no fellow laborers, there are only colleagues.

Paul gives us such an important principle here of being of the same Spirit and walking the same steps. We know that this word "companion" is also very precious. There is mutual fellowship. To be in the same Spirit, some translations have it as the same Holy Spirit. This is true, because we all follow the Holy Spirit. Paul's fellow workers follow the Holy Spirit. They are all born of the Spirit, and walk by the Spirit.

Today, God has given us the Holy Spirit. Each one of us must walk by the Spirit. We must learn to obey the Spirit and have Him guide us. When the Spirit is governing us, and we are ruled by the Spirit, we gather together in the same Spirit, and we can be fellow laborers. When there is the Holy Spirit, there is the same vision, and there can be fellowship. The scriptures speak about this richly.

Another important point is that they all have the spirit of a servant. They all serve the Lord, and love the Master's house. In the scripture, there are many instances of how God has given someone "the spirit of a servant". I will give you some illustrations from the Bible.

When Paul views his fellow workers, they have a pure spirit. They do not love the world, nor do they care for its riches and fame. We know that if we follow the Lord today without a pure spirit, we are easily tempted by faith and wealth. We know that Satan uses this to feed our flesh. All of us love this. Don't we all want to be famous? Many who serve the Lord want to be famous. Fame is a great temptation for those who serve the Lord. But brothers and sisters, the world knows that the wind blows hard on a big tree.

Who does not like wealth? Does it not bring more pleasure? These are the schemes of the devil. We must have a pure heart and clean hands. Otherwise we will destroy our own future and the Lord's work. The worker of the Lord must have a pure spirit, and also a righteous and just spirit. They must do what is right in the sight of God.

When we serve the Lord, we live in the sight of others. Many times, we feel the need to please them is greater than to please the Lord. There must be righteousness. Paul held on to this righteousness. He wrote how at the end, when he sees the Lord, there is a crown of righteousness reserved for him. So we must have a righteous spirit.

We also need a kind and gentle spirit. What does this mean? It means that we do not harm others. The flesh will harm others, but this gentle spirit will not harm others. You know, when we gather together, we often harm each other. We must have this gentle spirit.

When the Lord was on earth, He was the servant of God. He had such a kind and gentle spirit. When the Jews mistreated Him, He only repaid evil with good. Even as they mocked and scorned Him on the cross, He was so kind to pray that the Father forgive them for they do not know what they do. By each stripe it shows how kind our Lord is. When they pressed the crown of thorns on His head, the blood that flowed forth was in kindness.

Oh, the reproach He suffered for us! But the greater the reproach, the greater His kindness shone forth! This is the spirit we must have today. We are surrounded by the circumstances of

the flesh. But when we have this spirit within, when we love brothers and sisters; when we love the unlovable, when we love despite how others treat us, what flows forth from us is kindness. This is the spirit of the servant. This is the spirit of obedience. Our Lord came and was willing to suffer.

This is also the spirit of faithfulness. Our Lord was faithful to the Father. Paul saw the ministry entrusted to him, and considered it greater than his own life. He was faithful unto death.

Brothers and sisters, we read on and also see how God gives us the spirit of wisdom that we may know the heart of God. So that we will not do something foolish. Because of our foolishness, how many foolish things we have done in our lives. How many unwise things!

I remember an elder brother in Seattle who often said this, "Our God will never do a thing that is unwise." This is right. May the Lord grant such a spirit of counsel to his servants. That we may know how to counsel with spiritual principle. It is important to have this spirit of giving good counsel. Many times when we encounter something, we have a meeting and everyone gives their opinion. But we need to see who has the spirit of counsel, able to bring forth the spiritual principle of the Lord. And then there is a way forward.

This way is also one of reverence and understanding. When we have this understanding, it produces reverence. We live in a generation without reverence for the Lord. We do not often see this God-fearing heart in the church. Because we lack reverence, we have lost out on so much of God's blessing.

I remember Brother Kaung sharing that in China in the 1930s, they lacked the spiritual understanding we have today, but they had a reverent and God-fearing heart. There were many things they did not dare do. I confess that we fall short here. We have so much spiritual understanding, that we rationalize our wrongdoings and appease our conscience. We have lost the reverent heart for the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, He is a fearful God. You know that there is the aspect of judgment with the Lord. It is a blessed thing to fear the Lord.

From the Bible we see many other spirits which God gives to His servants. This is very precious.

When Paul wrote 2 Timothy, there was a reason for this. His younger co-worker Timothy was more timid and weak. Timothy was not like Titus who was more strong and bold. Titus was assigned the more difficult tasks. Timothy was virtuous, but his character was more timid. He was beside Paul, so he had that security because Paul was in the forefront. Just like when we are young, we follow the older brothers. We are just cheerleaders at the back because we have someone to lean on.

But now Paul is imprisoned, and Timothy is an elder in Ephesus, not knowing what to do. This led to many tears for Timothy. Paul knew this hardship for Timothy, and how his spirit was weak. And so Paul wrote to him in 2 Timothy that "God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of love and a sound mind." God's spirit is strong, filled with love, and also of a sound mind. Paul was cheering on and encouraging the spirit of Timothy. One of the last words in 2 Timothy, Paul writes "may the Spirit of the Lord be with your spirit."

For one serving the Lord, it is difficult when we have a weak spirit. It is hard to express the gifts we have received. So Paul encourages the spirit of Timothy. When we speak of the spirit of a servant, we see so much teaching here. We thank the Lord that Paul and his fellow-workers and companions are of the same Spirit, so they can serve together.

Not only are they of one spirit, but they are of the same step. Now whose footsteps are we talking about here? We could say that Titus and Timothy are young, and following the footsteps of Paul. Many younger brothers and sisters may like to follow a brother or sister who are gifted. When I was young I often noticed how the older brothers and sisters were surrounded by younger brothers and sisters who imitated them and followed along. When the older brothers and sisters passed on, these younger ones did not know what to do.

Brothers and sisters, whose footsteps should they follow? They follow the footsteps of no other. When Peter wrote his epistles, he reminds us of how he suffered to leave us a model to follow. We know that Peter followed the steps of the Lord, as did Paul. Paul also encouraged the saints to follow the steps of the Lord. Paul, at that time, was gifted and well known. Many wanted to imitate Paul. But Paul wrote, "imitate me as I imitate Christ." That they should walk in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus.

Peter especially tells us that the Lord walked this heavenly way in suffering. So today if we want to walk this heavenly way, we must understand that the footsteps of the Lord were walked in suffering. The Lord desires for us to follow after Him. We must arm ourselves with this heart to suffer. There is a cost. But brothers and sisters, this cost is worth it.

There is this saying in English, "No pain, no glory." If we fear pain today and are not willing to walk this way, there is no glory. So let us prepare ourselves to follow the steps of our Lord. Peter also shows us this model of how he suffered and followed after the Lord.

How do we follow the Lord's steps today? We can say that there the gospels that record our Lord's walk on this earth for 33 and a half years. We see the gospels and the stories of our Lord. We can see the footsteps of our Lord. It is so rich, and hard for us to remember all the points.

We thank the Lord, that as I read the epistles of Paul, especially Philippians 2, we see how Paul has done something wonderful. Paul writes all the experience of the Lord, and summarizes it into these simple points to show us how we may walk the steps of our Lord. We know how precious Philippians 2:5-8 are. In all these decades that have passed, these are verses I cannot forget. I often share this with brothers and sisters.

I remember sharing this passage at this conference years ago. But bear with me as I share this with brothers and sisters. This provides the direction for us as we want to serve. Paul tells us that we ought to have this mindset as it is in Christ.

Today, we may do whatever is on our mind. Our steps are guided by our mind. When our Lord was on the earth, his footsteps revealed His mind. If we have the mind of Christ in us, we naturally follow after His steps. We thank the Lord and our brother Paul who has left us something very wonderful.

I want to use these words again as a reminder for brothers and sisters. May we remember this deep in our hearts, that we may know well how to walk after His footsteps. Each point is very precious. It is not easy for us to pull this out from the fullness of the four gospels. But Paul has extracted and summarized it for us. It is a great help to us.

"who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God;"
Philippians 2:6

These words are very unique. "Who, subsisting in the form of God". He is one of the godhead in the triune God. Paul is saying that Christ has this position and worth of equality with God that He could have grasped, but He did not see it as something to be grasped. The focus is on Christ not grasping it. We must understand this in our daily lives. There should be no aspect of fighting or devouring each other over anything.

Jacob tells us that all of us have this combative nature in us. We like to fight. We start at home. There aren't many husbands and wives who do not fight. It happens because each of us has a spirit of contention within us. We have this corrupt nature in us. We fight in society, and we bring it into the church. This is not walking after His footsteps. We must have the mindset of Christ. We see how the Lord, when in this world, fought over nothing. There should be harmony and peace in the church. We should have this mindset and attitude. This is the nature of one who walks the heavenly way.

"but made Himself of no reputation,"
Philippians 2:7a NKJV

"But made Himself of no reputation", and "emptied Himself". The original language is that He emptied Himself. He emptied all of His self interest. The best way to put it is that this is a consecrated life. Do you know what it means to be consecrated? We pray "I consecrate myself to You.", but we need to realize what is to come.

In the Old Testament, the offering involves the killing of the lamb, the flaying of the skin, being chopped to pieces, then put together and laid on the altar to be burned to ashes. What does it mean to offer oneself as a sacrifice? It means that there is no longer I.

So when we say we want to offer ourselves to the Lord, we need to think hard about it. It means that there is no more self. As a Christian we must have a life of consecration and sacrifice. When our Lord was on the earth, He offered Himself as the Lamb who was slain. He was placed on the altar. He emptied all of Himself and left nothing of Himself.

Brothers and sisters, think hard. Sometimes when we have conflict with others, we pray to the Lord not to live in ourselves. The more we pray, the more active and alive the self becomes. We have sleepless nights. A sister once shared how a brother scolded her, and after he left, she couldn't sleep for seven nights and then suffered nosebleeds. She couldn't place herself down.

To walk this heavenly way, we must empty ourselves of all self-interests. Satan often deceives us. He uses many things to incite our flesh. Like our brother Dana shared, there is a hook behind many things that hook on to our flesh, and pull our self out, disrupting our life and service.

Our Lord, when He was on the earth, emptied Himself. We know our own corrupt nature. It is all rubbish. Why do we treasure garbage? Do you hold on to the trash at home? Do we not throw it all out? We feel happy tossing rubbish away. We get rid of it, and feel the release of it. May we have the same mentality. You will feel the same joy and peace.

"taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men."
Philippians 2:7b NKJV

Why did Christ take on the form of a servant? He did this in order to serve. If we do not have the form of a bondservant, we cannot serve. A brother often shared that when a family hires a servant, they are wary of hiring a servant that is too clever. They do whatever they want to do, and when you are out, they rearrange everything in the house, according to their own plan.

That's how we are when we serve the Lord. There are so many examples in church history. After the Master handed things to the servant and went to a faraway place, the servant is so happy and does things his way. This is what the evil servant does. He forgets that the Master will return.

As a bondservant, we do not have our own thoughts, opinions and ideas. We only obey the Master. As the Lord was on the earth, He was wholeheartedly willing to be the bondservant of God the Father. He did not come to be served but to serve. To obey is the most important quality of being a servant.

In the Old Testament, God allowed the people of Israel to be His servant. In Old Testament, the words "to obey" appears more than a thousand times. God keeps reminding His people to obey. But the people of Israel did not obey. If only they would obey!

In the New Testament, the heavenly Father also has a simple command: this is my beloved Son, listen to Him! As long as we listen to Him, we can live this Christian life. If we hear and obey Him, we can do that which is right. If we listen to Him, we bring blessing to the children of God, the church. Things are that simple.

Today, we have made things so complex in the church. We need so many things. Brothers and sisters, forgive me for saying this: the words "to equip" are not bad in itself, but I dislike hearing it. I tell them "you don't need to be well-equipped", you just need to listen to Him!" Things have become so complicated. We put everything on to equip ourselves. Like David putting on Saul's armor. It didn't fit him and he couldn't move. Things aren't that complicated. Hear Him. Obey Him.

God gave me this simple command, and 60 years have passed. Although I wasn't a very obedient servant, I am learning to obey. And each time I obeyed, there would be blessing.

So to have the form of a servant and to obey the Lord, and to take on the likeness of men. In all things Christ was made like men.

Sometimes I encounter others who tell me that others look like me. What does this mean? It means I look ordinary, like everyone else. Our Lord was willing to in the likeness of man, an ordinary man. We know that by nature we do not want to be ordinary. The Jews were offended

that Jesus was ordinary. That He was was carpenter's son. Even Paul hated him for being so ordinary.

In Hebrews 11, we should look at it from a different perspective that these are all ordinary people who by the grace of God, have extraordinary experiences by faith. Likewise, we too can have these experiences. Brothers and sisters, are you willing to be ordinary?

In fact, it feels more and more that in this world, the ones who are ordinary are the ones who are most joyful. The famous can barely step into the supermarket or walk on the street. We who do not have much can walk peacefully. What is wrong with being ordinary? This is even more so in spiritual matters. Do we have such a mindset to follow the Master's footsteps to go this heavenly way?

"and having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross."

Philippians 2:8 DARBY

He humbled Himself. The word "humble" in the original text means to be lowly. You might have heard me share how many years ago I wrote back and forth with brother Kaung, and his letters would often leave me uneasy in my room. He would end his letters with "your little brother in the Lord, Stephen". When I read his letter, I did not dare believe it. He is writing to a younger brother. Even if he had signed of "brother in the Lord", it would be fine. But he signed off "your little brother in the Lord", leaving me to be at a loss of how to reply. I could not write "your littler brother in the Lord".

Our brother Kaung knew how to make himself low. Even this plain letter from him showed me a great lesson, and I was moved.

Our Lord made Himself little. He is the Lamb. In eternity, He is the little Lamb, in Revelation. Our glorious Lord, our great Lord whom all the angels prostate and worship, has made Himself little. If we make ourselves little there is no hardship in the church. If we make ourselves little, there is no hardship in the home.

Brothers and sisters, it is because we are too big. We think we are big. We get upset when others belittle us. Our Lord was willing to humble Himself. Are we willing to do likewise? Do we have the same mindset? Are we walking in His steps in this heavenly way?

"Becoming obedient". Our Lord was willing to be obedient. This is best explained by our Lord in the garden of Gethsemane. "Not my will, but yours." In other words, "I surrender my will to yours".

Each one of us have our own will. Many brothers and sisters are strong-willed. It is hard to get along. We are the same with God. When we surrender our will to Him, there is obedience. Only when there is obedience can the will of God be done. Our Lord's obedience was a glorious and great obedience. Romans tells us that because of one man's disobedience, all have disobeyed, but because of one Man's obedience, the fallen world is restored. We can see how great our Lord's obedience is. May we have this mindset, that we can follow in His steps. When we become obedient, our lives can glorify our Lord.

Lastly, He died the death on the cross. It was a death filled with shame. Each time we see the bread and the cup, we have to be greatly moved. His grace came at such an immeasurable cost. He was beaten and a crown of thorns was placed on His head. He was spat upon, and whipped. He was stripped naked and crucified on the cross. Brothers and sisters, what a death.

We look to the Lord's mercy. He was wholeheartedly willing. His death has become the foundation of our life, and our greatest rest. It is our greatest salvation.

My dear brothers and sisters, today the Lord allows us to go through this death of the cross. We thank the Lord that Paul has summarized the Lord's life in the four gospels, and put these 7 important points with us. When we have the mindset of Christ, we will naturally walk in His steps on the heavenly way. Today, not only do we walk after His steps, we are also His spiritual companions. Together with brothers and sisters, we walk in the steps of our Lord, companions along the way. In these difficult times we walk after the Lord. It is difficult to walk this way alone, but God has given us many companions. Paul needed companions. We, too, need companions. May we be companions on this heavenly way, encouraging one another, cheering each other on.

The prophet Isaiah prophesied about what is to come, that one day the mountain of the Lord shall be exalted. And all hills and nations shall flow into it. Today, we know that there are many saints running the heavenly way from all nations. They are all running towards the house of the Lord. Let us go up to the house of the Lord. Let us go up the mountain of the Lord, to the house of Jacob. And He will teach us His ways and we will walk in His path.

May the Lord open our ears today, that we may hear His calling and rise to run this way. As fellow companions may we run together. I say again, we are in the last days. We do not have many opportunities. May we treasure the opportunities before us, whether we are young or old. Let us press forward and run this heavenly way towards the purpose of God. So that when He returns, we shall welcome Him with great joy and rejoice in His presence.

May the Lord bless us, brothers and sisters.

Lord, we are filled with thanksgiving unto You. You have not forgotten about us. Although so many years have passed, we are still very weak, but you cheer us on and encourage us. The world is changing so quickly, and there are so many signs around us pointing to the fact you are coming back soon. Lord, we cry out from the depths of our heart, "come quickly! Come quickly!" Keep us, so that when we see you face to face, we may not be ashamed. May your word remain in our hearts and be our light, our life and our strength. May you give us a heart that longs after you, that we may rise up to run the race before us. We thank you for your mercy and grace. We thank you for your presence. Hear this our prayer. In the precious name of our Lord Jesus, Amen