

PART II

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Brother Hoseah Wu

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Although I was not praying with my brothers backstage this afternoon, I would ask my brothers and sisters to pray with me. As I share, you pray for me, because we are all together before the Lord. I feel very strongly about God's word, God Himself speaking to me. Even although I am up here and my brother is here with me, we are all before the Lord. We are here to learn of our Lord Jesus Christ. My heart's cry is that the Lord will really get what He is after in this conference. If He does not gain what He is after, then we are gathering in vain. But, thank God! He gathered us for His purpose. And indeed, He has already spoken out of His heart to our hearts. Thank Him for speaking to us. We just need to pray that our hearts would respond. We are creatures of habit. We come, sit on a comfortable cushioned seat and expect to be entertained. So we always come to a conference to get something for ourselves. Thank God, there is a place for that. But our getting is very secondary. His getting is primary, because we are redeemed, we are called, and we are kept for Himself.

Now, we already know that the theme of this conference is: Looking for and hastening the coming of the Day of God. When I was waiting before the Lord, He really impressed on my heart about this particular phrase in II Peter. But the question I asked myself: Who is waiting and who is really anxious? Which party is really looking and is really anxious? I think the Lord Himself is most anxious. He is always looking; He is waiting; He wants to hasten that Day. On our part, although we look and we hasten, in a sense we still have hesitancy. Because we are still very much caught up with ordinary things. If we are more spiritual, we are even caught up with spiritual things. Spiritual things can be an end in itself, and then we miss what

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the Lord is really after. So, even though we are looking and want to hasten that Day, we have to confess that in our motive there is a mixture there. There is always a mixture there. We need the Lord to purify our motive. This is why we are here this week. We ask the Lord to do something in us.

We know that Paul's first epistle was written to the church in Thessalonica. In that epistle, Paul also mentioned the coming of the Lord. The saints in Thessalonica were greatly loved by the Apostle Paul. When you read I and II Thessalonians, you notice how much Paul loved the saints there, and how Paul and his associates were warmly received by the saints in Thessalonica. They received Paul's words not as his words, but as God's words. And they received God's words in much tribulation and with much joy. That is a normal way to receive God's words. But today we emphasize the joyful side of receiving God's words but fail to see the side of tribulation. But if the Lord's words were to penetrate our hearts, first the Holy Spirit has to undo many things in our hearts, because naturally in us there is no sensitivity for God's words. So the Holy Spirit has to do a ground work in our hearts to pave the way for the planting of God's words. But when the Holy Spirit removes things from us, oftentimes it is not comfortable, especially many of us have some Christian background and consider these things as good and spiritual. However, when the light of God's words come to us, we discover these are not really His. Oftentimes they are of man. Oftentimes they are of tradition. And oftentimes our own culture mixes in there. So, if the Lord wishes to implant in us and really to live in us, the Holy Spirit has to undo a lot of things with us.

The Thessalonian saints received God's word, even though in tribulation but with great joy. So God lay in my heart this afternoon a desire to share something with you from I Thessalonians. Once they received the Word, they turned away from their idols and served the living God. They were new saints, new believers in Christ Jesus. The Lord came in such a strong and powerful way, there was a real drastic transformation in their lives. They turned away from their idols immediately and then served the living God and were waiting for the coming of the Son of God. When you read I Thessalonians, you will notice that all their services were done with God's end and with that

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day in view. It was for that day.

Let us look at a few verses in the Scriptures. Let us see what the Lord is looking for in these people when He comes and what we should occupy with in the meantime while we are here before He returns. But before I point out the three things the saints in Thessalonica did, as mentioned in I Thessalonians 1:3, let me mention this. When the saints there turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven (1:9-10), in the meantime they were engaging in three very basic things. They were not waiting passively for the coming of the Lord. They were waiting and looking actively for the coming of the Lord. In the New Testament, this 'looking' or 'waiting' is always very positive. It is always looking or waiting with anticipation. They can wait with anticipation because they have a deep assurance of what is real. They have assurance. So they engaged in three ministries, as mentioned in verse 3: first, they had the work of faith. Faith is the foundation. Then they had labor of love and steadfastness of hope. This afternoon we will share on the work of faith. Tomorrow afternoon we shall touch on the labor of love. Then on the third day, we shall share on steadfastness of hope.

Their work of faith is related to that day. Their labor of love is also related to the coming of that day. And their steadfastness of hope is also related to that day. In other words, they were not serving for service's sake. They were not living for themselves. They were all occupied with the Lord's business. They were living for the Lord. Now, let us look at the other verses.

'When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?' (Luke 18:8b) 'Jesus answered, saying to them, "Have faith in God."' (Mark 11:22) In the original text, it says, 'Have faith of God.' 'Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. ...And without faith it is impossible to please Him for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.' (Hebrews 11:1-3, 6) 'In the beginning God ...' (Genesis 1:1a)

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When Paul wrote to Timothy, he told him that in the end time some will fall away in their faith. He also told Timothy that some of the saints in his days had already gone astray from the faith. Paul called Timothy 'my son in the faith', or 'my true child in the faith'. When we read I Timothy, we know this word 'faith' is the key word. Negatively, Paul told Timothy to avoid and flee from anything or anyone that will take that faith away from him. Paul, at the end of his life, admitted that what had taken him through was that faith. He said, 'I have kept the faith.' It was faith that kept him through. Faith in God kept him through. 'I began in faith, and faith in God kept me through to the very end.' So, Paul knew, deep down in his heart, that this gift of faith is very precious to God. If this faith in God is taken from us, we have nothing.

So Paul wrote to Timothy to tell him to flee from anything that would put his faith in danger. He said, 'For faith, put up a good fight. Nothing is worth fighting for but faith.' For, without faith, we cannot please God. So, in order to please God, we have to hold on to that faith. Faith is our lifeline. Faith is what allows God to be God in our lives. Without faith, God cannot do anything in us. So Paul told Timothy to put up a good fight for faith. Nothing else is worth fighting for but faith. But today Christians fight everything and anything but faith in God. When we come to the end of this age, our faith will be challenged. Our faith will be tried, because faith is something very precious. The Lord is looking for something real. So He will put our faith through fire. When it can come through fire, it will become more precious than anything else. For this faith is none other but God Himself, because only God Himself has faith and He wants us to have faith in Him.

Because I feel this faith is so foundational from our beginning, in our walk, and also at the end of our journey, I feel it is good and necessary to go back to the beginning of faith. Where did this faith begin? This faith began in Genesis 1:1, because God is the beginning of everything. Faith begins in Him and with Him. Faith is Him. So, this phrase 'in the beginning God' speaks a volume to us. I have been meditating on this phrase 'in the beginning God' for several weeks now. The more I meditated on this short phrase, the more it overwhelms me. Somebody says that this phrase 'in the beginning

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God' is God's signature, because the Bible is God's Book. It is His Book; He wrote it. Therefore He stamped His signature at the very beginning of this Book we called the Bible. He is the author of this Book.

From this phrase 'in the beginning God', we see that this is how God first introduced Himself to mankind. This phrase 'in the beginning God' is a compound word; you cannot separate 'God' from 'beginning', or separate 'beginning' from 'God'. Put these words together and you have 'God'. Because without God, you do not have the beginning. God is the beginning, and the beginning is God Himself. So this is how God introduced Himself to humanity. He is the beginning. And because He is the beginning, He gives meaning to this Book and gives substance to this Book. If there is no 'beginning God', this Book would be just blank pages, because everything begins with Him.

From this statement 'in the beginning God', we can see that He is the one Who has faith. He is God Who has faith in Himself. Therefore He begins what He begins, because He has absolute faith in Himself. He has full confidence in Himself. We use these words a lot -- God is faithful. It means that God is full of faith Himself. This is why He is the beginning of everything. He is the originator, the initiator, because He has faith in Himself. We need to settle this. If we have this settled in our hearts, we can be delivered from many other problems that we face.

This statement 'in the beginning God' in Genesis also draws our attention to the fact that God is a God of purpose. He has a will. He has a plan. He has an objective. His intention for us is to believe that He is such a God Who has faith in Himself and Who has a purpose and has a plan. He wants us to believe the way He introduced Himself to us in Genesis 1:1, that He is the beginning.

This statement 'in the beginning God' shows us that He is a God Who has faith in Himself, as I have just mentioned. However, this statement is also the foundation of our faith. True faith is none other but God Himself. God Himself is the foundation of our faith. Brothers and sisters, what is the foundation of your faith? To a lot of

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Christians, the foundation of their faith is a creed. To some others, the foundation of their faith is an institution. To yet some others, the foundation of their faith is their way of doing things. But, brothers and sisters, the real foundation of faith is nothing and no one else but God Himself. God wants us to have faith in Him and in Him alone. This is a faith in God Himself as He declared Himself to be. Therefore the Bible is a book all about God. It is a book all about faith. If you take away God from the Bible, you have no Bible. If you take away faith from the Bible, you have no Bible. The Bible is a book all about God Himself, and it is a book about faith. It is a book about God's eternal purpose, not just His purposes, but also how that purpose ought to be timely and fully realized. It is all in the book. It is a book of God's blueprint with all the details. These details are all according to His wisdom.

God not only has the blueprint but also its end product, because God is the great 'I AM'. This is why the Book of Hebrews says, 'Without faith it is impossible to please Him for he who comes to God must believe that He is.' We say 'He is', but to Himself, He says 'I AM'. In other words, what was to Him is what He is today. What He will be in future is what He was before and what He is now. This is why He says, 'I AM'. So in His faith, in His purpose, in His will, what He has purposed, He has it now. We need to see it as God's people. What God works in us is based on what He has done in Jesus. He works from what is already done. Therefore we need faith to believe.

What God has done we cannot see with our human eyes. It is spiritual. We need to see with spiritual eyes. Yet, unfortunately, many of us today want to see what is visible. But spiritual things are almost all unseen. So, from the beginning to the end in the Bible, from the creation to the final consummation, God is working towards His purpose.

Throughout the Bible, we can say that we recognize there are four spiritual facts about God Himself which we must know and we must put our faith onto. If we understand some of these facts and put our faith on the anchor of these facts, it will help us to be the kind of people in whom He will find faith when He comes. We will then be the kind of people He will be looking for when He comes -- a people

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with faith, i.e. a people holding faith to the very end. This is what we find in Luke 18:8, 'When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?' Paul warned us that at the end time many will depart or fall from faith. So he asked Timothy to keep that faith and to fight for that faith to the very end. So these are the few facts we share that we need to know and need to put or anchor our faith on Him.

First is what our brother shared last evening and this morning. God is a God of purpose. He is a purposeful God. Our God is in real business. He means what He is doing. He is totally committed to what He is doing. His energy and attention is all devoted to what He is doing. He is not like us. We have many hobbies. We have many projects. We pick up one, but when we find some difficulty, we drop it. We say we will pick it up later on. But if the project becomes very difficult, we will quit for good. But God is not like us. He is in real business. In all His ways, all His work and all His dealings with us, He has an objective in view. He has set His heart in what He is doing. We have heard this phrase: Once you are caught by God, you are caught forever. He will never give you up. He will deal with you until His work is finished in you, because He means business with you, individually as well as corporately. This is how He dealt with Jacob. This is also how He dealt with the nation Israel, because they were His people. He never gave them up. He will bring them to where He wants them to be. This is most important for us to recognize. To fail to recognize this will bring much disgrace to His name.

When we look around, not only the world, but also the whole Christendom, is very dark and very sad. Oftentimes, we do not see what we read in the New Testament happening around us. So, in our mind, we may have all kinds of questions. If God is God, how come things are the way they are? Some even think that perhaps God has already forgotten us. Not long ago, even some theologians had some new teaching that says our God is dead. It seems as if God is no longer interested in us. If He is interested in us, how come we are the way we are? Then some of the more zealous who really love the Lord even think of helping God out. They try to do something for God to help Him out, because they think He is not doing what He should be doing. He needs our help. But this is a wrong conception. This is

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where faith comes in. Although we do not see it, can we still believe God is working on towards His purpose and He is still getting what He is after? This is a real challenge to our faith.

The next thing you notice is that God is a God of design or pattern. He knows exactly what He is doing. He knows all the pieces of a large puzzle. He knows where all these pieces should be, because in His wisdom He placed them there. This is why you are placed where you are by the Lord's wisdom, for Him to work His pattern into you. This is why He put you where you are; in the fellowship where you are He put the brothers and sisters there. It is God's wisdom that He put you there, to work His pattern, to work Christ into you. Now, before the final piece is put into the puzzle, you will not see the beauty of the puzzle. It is not until all the pieces are put together that you begin to see the beauty. Brothers and sisters, the Lord is putting all these pieces together now. When all these pieces are finally put together, we will see glory. This is what we find in the tabernacle in the wilderness. Everything was according to the heavenly pattern and design. Moses may not know what he was doing. But God knows what He is doing. Moses obeyed. When all these pieces were put together, then glory was there.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord is after glory in His people. This is what we find in Ephesians 2 that we are saved by grace through faith, not of our works. So, no one can boast. For we are His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus. We are saved so that God can work this masterpiece for His own glory and so that He can work Christ into us. This is why we say that salvation is not the end; it is the beginning. God's glory is the end, God's masterpiece to be displayed in the whole creation, according to what He has in His heart. It is a reflection and an expression of what He really is.

The third thing we know about God is that God is a God of power. God has a purpose; God has a pattern. And He has the power to fulfill it. He is full of ability; He is a God of ability. He has great capacity. In Genesis 1, when God spoke, it was done. This is God's power. What God purposed, He gets it. What He is after, He will have it. 'The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will

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stand." (Isaiah 14:24) 'For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?' (Isaiah 14:27) This sentence - 'Is there anything too difficult for the Lord?' - appears three times. This was spoken by God Himself.

Brothers and sisters, our flesh and our disbelief can delay His work, but we cannot stop His work. My disbelief and my flesh can hinder God from accomplishing His work in me. But God's work can go on with others, because His work goes on. God, being a God of faith, does everything in the principle of faith. He wants us have faith in Him. In John 6:28-29, when the Jews asked Jesus how they may work the works of God, He said, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him.' That is faith. Faith is work.

Paul said to the Thessalonians, 'You have the work of faith.' Brother Campbell Morgan said that this work of faith has to do with what is said in chapter 5 : 'Rejoice always.' For faith is always God's work. Faith is always believing what is not seen. The work of faith is often of this nature. Oftentimes it cannot be seen by men. Men may, or may not, approve, because they cannot see. This is spiritual work that only God can see. And God takes account of what is real. The Thessalonian Church had the work of faith. The work of faith oftentimes is not visible, some thing that you may not even feel. But, in your faith, when you know that God knows your work is based on faith, you rejoice always. You rejoice in what is not seen but real. No one can take it away. If you rely on what is visible to rejoice, you will be disappointed quickly. How often so-called God's work has greatly disappointed us, because it is all visible. Our joy is always short-term joy.

In the Thessalonian Church, their work of faith is only for the Lord to see. Is our ministry today for men to see or for God to see? If people criticize us, saying, 'Oh, you have nothing to show', do not be disappointed. If your work or ministry is unto the Lord, do not be concerned about what men think of you. Only what God thinks of you matters.

God's purpose is the Lord Jesus Himself. But it is not just the Lord Jesus Himself, but also the Church. All things were created by

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Him and through Him. God so loved His Son He created everything for Him. All God wants is already secured in His son, because He is His beloved Son. His Son is His joy and His satisfaction. We cannot make His joy in the Lord any fuller than it is now, because we cannot add anything to it. But if anything comes to Him, it is always His pure love. So, in a sense, God already has everything He wants in His Son Lord Jesus. He has secured everything in the Lord Jesus.

But, somehow, in the Godhead, God wants many sons like the Lord Jesus. This is why the Lord Jesus became a man. God has secured everything in His Son the Lord Jesus representatively, so that what He has given us through the Holy Spirit can work into us. What the Lord is doing is really working Christ into us. We are called unto His purpose; that is, we are called unto Christ. Christ is the purpose of God. We are called unto that purpose; we are called to Christ and to the Holy Spirit who, through the work of the cross, works the corporate Christ into our being, so that Christ can bring many sons to glory.

Brothers and sisters, on our part, we have to respond, because God's purpose in Christ includes humanity, those who are called out according to His purpose. So, we need to respond and to allow the Lord to work Himself into us. If we are called to His purpose, then the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, works Christ into us. Thank God. What He has begun He will surely finish. Of course, the pattern is also Christ. We are to conform to the image of His Son.

God is the initiator of everything. What God has initiated, no matter what happens along the way, He will succeed in the end. This is a challenge to our faith. In things originating from you, you may have a good beginning but you will have a bad end. But for anything originally initiated by God, God will see to it to the very end. So, I always take comfort. It is not that I have chosen Him, but He has chosen me. When He chooses me, He knows what He is doing, and He will take full responsibility if I put myself in His hands. He is the initiator, and He is also the finisher.

It is very comforting to read II Timothy 1:9 where it says we are called according to His purpose, and that purpose was in time past,

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way back in eternity. That purpose was there then, in eternity past. But you will notice that grace was also made available then. So, what God purposed, He also gave us grace to attain the goal. We only have to have faith to believe and also faith to appropriate grace for the Lord to finish that work in us.

In concluding, I just mention a few things to encourage brothers and sisters. Romans 15 gives us three very interesting descriptions of God. In Romans 15:3, God is called the God of peace. Then verse 5 mentions the God of patience, and in verse 13, He is the God of hope.

I will first share a little on the God of patience. He is a God of patience. This word 'patience' is a very interesting word. It has to do with endurance, perseverance and long-suffering. Negatively speaking, God can take a great deal of injury upon Himself without resorting to revenge. He can endure wrongs but He never approves them. Peter once said that God's patience is our salvation. God is patient so that many will turn to Him and may not perish. God is not patient with the world, but He is patient with us the saints. Positively speaking, He is patiently working Christ into our lives. We are such a hard lot of people. We are not cooperative. How He patiently works Christ into us! However, brothers and sisters, God's patience will come to an end one day. That day will be the day of judgement. Thank God for His patience. May we take His patience seriously and allow Him to work more Christ into us.

Now, on this matter about the God of hope. Hope has no real place until we know all the surroundings that we face we calculate to disappoint and to bring us to despair. Hope has no meaning until our surroundings will bring us despair and disappoint us. It is in the midst of hopelessness that hope means something to us. When we look at our surroundings, we see that it is hopeless. When we look at ourselves, sometimes we say we are hopeless too. But God wants us to have hope in the midst of hopelessness. And that takes a great deal of faith because only God's faith can do that. In spite of all the divisions among God's people, can we say in hope and faith that God's people are always one? It takes faith. In the midst of seeming defeat, can we dare to say that the children of God are always victorious? It takes

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faith. Brothers and sisters, God needs this kind of people in these last days. We want to see what God has accomplished for Himself; we do not want to see what is down here on earth.

Lastly, God is God of peace. He is not disturbed, because He knows what He is doing. He is God of purpose. He is God of power. He is fulfilling His purposes. When His hands are outstretched, nobody can stay Him. His work goes on. Nothing can disturb Him, because the end is in His hands. He is our God. Brothers and sisters, we move from victory to victory. When we look at all the human side of the church, we will be greatly disturbed. Yet, in the midst of such sins we see around here, many saints I know have such peace within them. Brothers and sisters, that peace is not our peace; that peace is God's peace. Are you disturbed? Have faith in God. Are you hopeless? Have faith in God, because God is faithful to Himself. Whatever He purposed He always secures and has already secured. He works from that faith. He cannot work on any other ground but on that faith. What He wants, He already has it, and He works from what is already done. We need to see that. We thank God for that. Our faith has a sure foundation. And we can go on.

Brothers and sisters, are you on a sure foundation? Is the foundation of your faith in God Himself, or on something else? At the end of these last days, we need to hold on to that, because many things would shake us to the foundation. Let us hope that our foundation is a solid rock. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, saying, 'I always give thanks to God for your work of faith.' It is God's work. That is why it is a work of faith. It is not our work. It is God's work. God's work is always a work of faith. God is responsible, and He is insistent. He sees it all. This should lift us up from the earthly to the heavenly, to what is real in Christ Jesus. So, may the Lord help us. Be a people of faith when He comes, faith in God and in God alone.

Let us pray: *Father, we just want to commit these very weak and feeble words back to You. Use them for Your glory. Use them to prepare us for Your coming. Lord, we pray that when You come, You will find those who have faith in You and those who indeed are living a life pleasing to You. Help us, Lord, to be such people. Unto You, we just offer our praise and thanksgiving. What we cannot do, You*

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can do We worship You. In Your precious name. Amen.

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