

**FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT,
FINISHING THE COURSE,
KEEPING THE FAITH,
AND
LOVING THE LORD'S APPEARING
IN ORDER TO RECEIVE
THE REWARD OF CHRIST
AS THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

French-speaking Conference
Paris, France
3-5 May 2024

Schedule

Friday, May 3

19:30 - 21:10 Message 1

Saturday, May 4

10:00 - 11:25 Message 2

11:25 - 12:30 Special fellowship

12:30 - 14:25 Lunch

14:30 - 16:10 Message 3

16:40 - 18:25 Message 4

Lord's day, May 5

09:30 - 12:15 Lord's table and Message 5

Key Statements for the 2024 International Chinese-speaking Conference

**As revealed in 2 Timothy 4:7, a proper Christian life is threefold;
it involves fighting the good fight,
running and finishing the course, and keeping the faith.**

**In the New Testament, faith is both objective and subjective;
the objective faith refers to the things in which we believe,
and the subjective faith has to do with our action of believing.**

**In order for us to enjoy Christ as our kingdom reward,
we must love the Lord's appearing,
which is His appearing and manifestation to us today
and His presence with His people at His second coming,
by staying on the constricted way of being watchful in life
and faithful in service to be constituted as the bride of Christ.**

**When the Lord comes again, faith will be turned to facts,
and praise will replace prayer.**

**Love will consummate in a shadowless perfection,
and we will serve Him in the sinless domain.**

What a day that will be! Lord Jesus, come quickly!

Message One

Fighting the Good Fight

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 4:7a; 1 Tim. 1:18; 6:12

2 Tim. 4:7: I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.

1 Tim. 1:18: This charge I commit to you, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you might war the good warfare.

1 Tim. 6:12: Fight the good fight of the faith; lay hold on the eternal life, to which you were called and have confessed the good confession before many witnesses.

I. As revealed in 2 Timothy 4:7, a proper Christian life is threefold; it involves fighting the good fight, running and finishing the course, and keeping the faith.

II. “I have fought the good fight”—v. 7a:

- A. The believers fight the good fight by receiving the apostle’s charge—1 Tim. 1:18:
 - 1. The charge given by the apostle to his spiritual son concerns the economy of God positively and the different teachings negatively—vv. 3-4.
 - 2. Paul charged Timothy to fight against the deviation from the faith, that is, to fight the good fight of the faith—6:12a.
- B. Paul told Timothy that according to the prophecies previously made concerning him, he “might war the good warfare”—1:18:
 - 1. To war the good warfare is to war against the different teachings of the dissenters and to carry out God’s economy—v. 4.
 - 2. This war is according to the apostle’s ministry concerning the gospel of grace and eternal life for the glory of the blessed God—vv. 11-16.
 - 3. On the one hand, Timothy was to war against the different teachings; on the other hand, he was to carry out God’s economy according to the apostle’s ministry—vv. 3-4, 18.
 - 4. To teach and preach God’s economy concerning Christ and the church is to war the good warfare—v. 18.
- C. First Timothy 6:12a says, “Fight the good fight of the faith”:
 - 1. To fight for the faith means to fight for God’s New Testament economy.
 - 2. In particular, it is to fight for Christ as the embodiment of God and for the church as the Body of Christ—Col. 2:9; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27.
 - 3. To fight the good fight of the faith is to fight for the contents of the complete gospel according to God’s New Testament economy—Eph. 3:6.
 - 4. Because of different teachings, the church had already become degraded and had deviated from the faith; Paul charged Timothy to fight against this deviation from the faith, which is to fight the good fight of the faith—1 Tim. 6:12a.
- D. In 1 Timothy 6:12b Paul goes on to say, “Lay hold on the eternal life, to which you were called”:
 - 1. The eternal life is actually the processed and consummated Triune God being life to us—John 3:15-16.
 - 2. The eternal life in 1 Timothy 6:12b is the divine life, the uncreated life of God, which is eternal.

3. *Eternal* denotes the nature more than the time element of the divine life—1 John 5:11.
 4. To fight the good fight of the faith in the Christian life, we need to lay hold on this divine life and not trust in our human life—cf. Matt. 16:25-26.
 5. We fight the good fight of the faith not only objectively but also subjectively by laying hold on the eternal life—1 Tim. 6:12b.
 6. The subtlety of the enemy in bringing deviation from the faith is to keep the believers from the eternal life.
 7. We, the genuine believers, must lay hold on the eternal life; without the eternal life we are nothing—1 John 5:11.
 8. We need to lay hold on the eternal life; then we will be able to fight the good fight—1 Tim. 6:12b.
 9. In 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, eternal life is stressed again and again—1 Tim. 1:16; 6:19; 2 Tim. 1:1, 10; Titus 1:2; 3:7.
 10. To carry out God's economy concerning the church, as seen in 1 Timothy, to confront the downward trend of the church's decline, as seen in 2 Timothy, and to maintain good order in the church, as seen in Titus, this life is a prerequisite.
- E. We are fighting the good fight against Satan and the kingdom of darkness:
1. We should not only be able to preserve ourselves whole but should also challenge the devil—Matt. 12:26, 28.
 2. We should be God's soldiers, fighting the good fight, overthrowing the devil's strongholds, and taking captive man's thoughts unto the obedience of Christ—2 Cor. 10:3-5.
- F. We are fighting the good fight for the truth—1 Tim. 6:12; 1 John 1:6; 2:21; 4:6:
1. Truth is the Triune God with His word—John 1:1, 14-17; 14:6, 16-17; 15:26; 16:13; 17:17; 18:37b.
 2. The divine truth is absolute, and we must be absolute for the truth and uphold the absoluteness of the truth—14:6; 18:37; 3 John 3-4, 8.
 3. We should honor God's truth, take the way of the truth, and not compromise the truth in any way—2 Pet. 2:2.
 4. We need to have the truth wrought into us and constituted into our being—1 John 1:8; 2:4; 2 John 1-2; 3 John 3-4.
 5. For the consummation of the divine economy, we should be absolute for the present truth and the highest truth and the subjective truths—2 Pet. 1:12; Rom. 8:3; 1:3-4; 12:4-5; John 8:32; 14:6.
 6. We must learn to teach and preach things that are higher than where we are.
 7. For the consummation of the divine economy, we should be absolute for the way of the divine truth—2 Pet. 2:2.
 8. The churches should bear the responsibility to clarify our teachings in order to fight for the truth, care for the Lord's recovery, and take care of our testimony—1 Tim. 3:15; 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7.

Message Two

Finishing the Course

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 4:7b; Acts 20:24; 1 Cor. 9:24-26; Heb. 12:1-2a

2 Tim. 4:7: I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.

Acts 20:24: But I consider my life of no account as if precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of God.

1 Cor. 9:24-26: 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. ²⁵And everyone who contends exercises self-control in all things; they then, that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we, an incorruptible. ²⁶I therefore run in this way, not as though without a clear aim; I box in this way, not as though beating the air.

Heb. 12:1-2: 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, ²Looking 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.

I. “I have finished the course”—2 Tim. 4:7b:

- A. Paul began to run the heavenly race after the Lord took possession of him, and he continually ran (1 Cor. 9:24-26; Phil. 3:12-14) that he might finish it (Acts 20:24).
- B. Now at the end he triumphantly proclaimed, “I have finished the course” (2 Tim. 4:7b); for this he will receive from the Lord a reward—the crown of righteousness (v. 8).

II. A proper Christian life involves running the course, running the race, for the carrying out of God’s economy according to His eternal purpose—1 Cor. 9:24; Eph. 1:11; 3:11:

- A. We need to seek out the journey that the Lord has ordained for us and faithfully walk on it, paying any price to wholeheartedly continue on our journey until we reach the end—2 Tim. 4:7b.
- B. The journey that the Lord has ordained for us is the race that we all run—Heb. 12:1.
- C. We need to “run with endurance the race which is set before us”—v. 1:
 1. Like the apostle Paul, all Christians must run the race to win the prize, not salvation in the common sense but a reward in a special sense—10:35; 1 Cor. 3:14-15; 9:26-27; Phil. 3:13-14.
 2. We need to run the race with endurance, suffering the opposition with endurance—Heb. 12:2-3.
- D. We run the Christian race by “looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith”—v. 2a:
 1. Jesus is the Author of faith, the Originator, the Inaugurator, the source, and the cause of faith—v. 2:
 - a. The faith of the believers is actually not their own faith but Christ entering into them to be their faith—Rom. 3:22; Gal. 2:16.
 - b. Our believing is our appreciation of Christ as a reaction to His attraction—Rom. 10:17.

- c. We need to look away unto Jesus with undivided attention by turning away from every other object—Heb. 12:1-2a; S. S. 1:4; Psa. 27:4.
 - d. When we look away unto Jesus, He as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) transfuses us with Himself, with His believing element.
 - 2. Faith is a substantiating ability, the ability by which we substantiate, give substance to, the things unseen or hoped for—Heb. 11:1:
 - a. We must exercise our spirit of faith, our mingled spirit, to believe and to speak the things that we have experienced of the Lord—2 Cor. 4:13.
 - b. Faith is in our spirit, which is mingled with the Holy Spirit—1 Cor. 6:17.
 - 3. We do not regard, look at, the things that are seen but the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal—2 Cor. 4:18:
 - a. The Christian life is a life of things not seen—Rom. 8:24-25; Heb. 11:27; 1 Pet. 1:8; Gal. 6:10.
 - b. The degradation of the church is the degradation from the unseen things to the seen things; the Lord's recovery is to recover His church from the things seen to the things not seen—John 20:25; 2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 8:24-25; 1 Pet. 1:8.
 - 4. Jesus is the Perfecter of faith, the Finisher and Completer of faith—Heb. 12:2:
 - a. As the Completer of faith, the Lord Jesus continually infuses Himself into us as the believing element and ability.
 - b. When we look away unto Him, He ministers heaven, life, and strength to 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—2 Cor. 3:18.
 - c. As we look away unto Him continually, He will finish and complete the faith that we need to run the heavenly race—Heb. 12:1-2a.
- E. We need to be encouraged and warned by the type of the children of Israel, whose journey toward the good land typifies the Christian race toward our good land, the all-inclusive Christ—1 Cor. 10:1-13:
 - 1. We have been redeemed through Christ, delivered out of Satan's bondage, and brought into the revelation of God's economy.
 - 2. We may yet fail to reach the goal of God's calling, that is, to enter into the possession of our good land, Christ, and enjoy His riches for the kingdom of God that we may be His expression in the present age and participate in the fullest enjoyment of Christ in the kingdom age—Phil. 3:12-14; Matt. 25:21, 23.
- F. The last part of the journey ordained by God for each one of us is the most difficult part of the journey—cf. Mark 6:45-51:
 - 1. An important thing in the Christian life is to seek out the journey that the Lord has ordained and faithfully walk in it.
 - 2. We may be delighted to be on the right course, but how we run and end it is still a question.
- G. We should not grow weary, fainting in our soul for any reason (Heb. 12:3); rather, we should be those who run the race to the end:
 - 1. To be weary is to be without strength in the soul; everything seems to be in vain.

2. The one who falls down and rises again is the best runner: “Do not rejoice against me, O my enemy; / When I fall, I will rise up; / When I sit in the darkness, / Jehovah will be a light to me”—Micah 7:8.
3. We should not give up, become weary, or faint in our soul but look away unto Jesus and run the race set before us—Heb. 12:2a.

Message Three

Keeping the Faith

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 4:7c;

1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9; 4:1; 6:12; 1 Thes. 3:2; Jude 3

2 Tim. 4:7: I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.

1 Tim. 1:19: Holding faith and a good conscience, concerning which some, thrusting these away, have become shipwrecked regarding the faith.

1 Tim. 3:9: Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

1 Tim. 4:1: But the Spirit says expressly that in later times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons.

1 Tim. 6:12: Fight the good fight of the faith; lay hold on the eternal life, to which you were called and have confessed the good confession before many witnesses.

1 Thes. 3:2: And we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and encourage you for the sake of your faith.

Jude 3: Beloved, while using all diligence to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you and exhort you to earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

I. In the New Testament, faith is both objective and subjective:

- A. The objective faith refers to the subject of our believing, that is, to the things in which we believe; this objective faith includes the contents of God's New Testament economy—Eph. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:7c:
 1. *The faith* in Ephesians 4:13 is not faith as a believing action but the objective faith.
 2. The items of the objective faith are only those items that are related to our salvation—in other words, only those items that relate to Christ's person and work—John 3:16; 1:18; 1 John 4:9.
- B. Subjective faith has to do with our action of believing—John 3:15-16:
 1. According to this meaning, to have faith in the Lord is to believe in Him.
 2. All genuine believers in Christ are one in having faith related to Christ.
- C. In 1 Thessalonians 3:2 faith is not only subjective, referring to the saints' believing, as in verses 5, 6, and 10, but also objective, referring to what we believe in, as in 1 Timothy 3:9; 4:1; and 2 Timothy 4:7:
 1. These two aspects of faith involve one another.
 2. Our believing (subjective faith) is out of the things we believe and in the things we believe (objective faith).

II. "I have kept the faith"—v. 7c:

- A. *The faith* here is objective.
- B. The word *faith* in this verse implies our believing in Christ, taking His person and His redemptive work as the object of our faith—1 Tim. 1:19; Gal. 1:23.
- C. To keep the faith is to keep the entire New Testament economy of God—the faith concerning Christ as the embodiment of God and the mystery of God and the church as the Body of Christ and the mystery of Christ—1 Tim. 1:4.

III. First Timothy 6:12a says, "Fight the good fight of the faith":

- A. To fight for the faith means to fight for God's New Testament economy.
- B. To fight the good fight of the faith is to fight for the contents of the complete gospel according to God's New Testament economy—Eph. 1:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:4.

- C. Because of the different teachings, the church had already become degraded and had deviated from the faith—v. 3.
 - D. Paul charged Timothy to fight against the deviation from the faith, which is to fight the good fight of the faith—6:12a.
- IV. In 1 Timothy 6:12b Paul goes on to say, “Lay hold on the eternal life, to which you were called”:**
- A. To fight the good fight of the faith in the Christian life, we need to lay hold on this life—the eternal life, the divine life—and not trust in human life—v. 12b.
 - B. We fight the good fight of the faith not only objectively but also subjectively by laying hold on the eternal life—v. 12b.
 - C. We need to lay hold on the eternal life; then we will be able to fight the good fight of the faith—v. 12.
- V. A proper Christian life involves keeping the faith for participation in the divine riches in God’s economy—1:19; 3:9; 4:1; 6:12; Titus 1:4; Jude 3:**
- A. The economy of God is a matter in faith, that is, a matter that is initiated and developed in the sphere and element of faith—1 Tim. 1:4.
 - B. God’s economy, which is to dispense Himself into His chosen people, is not a matter in the natural realm nor in the work of the law but in the spiritual sphere of the new creation through regeneration by faith in Christ—2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:23-26.
 - C. By faith we are born of God to be His sons, partaking of His life and nature to express Him—John 1:12-13:
 1. By faith we are put into Christ to become members of the Body, sharing all that He is for His expression—Rom. 12:4-5.
 2. This is God’s plan, which is carried out in faith, according to God’s New Testament economy.
- VI. We need to hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience—1 Tim. 3:9:**
- A. The faith refers to the things we believe in, the things that constitute the gospel—Rom. 1:1, 3-4.
 - B. The mystery of the faith is mainly Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ—Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4.
 - C. In order to hold the mystery of the faith, we must have a pure conscience, a conscience purified from any mixture—1 Tim. 3:9; 1:19.
- VII. Jude says in his Epistle, “I found it necessary to write to you and exhort you to earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints”—v. 3b:**
- A. *The faith* in this verse is not subjective; it is objective.
 - B. The word *faith* here does not refer to our believing but refers to our belief, to what we believe.
 - C. The faith in Jude 3 denotes the contents of the New Testament as our faith, in which we believe for our common salvation—Acts 6:7; 1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9; 4:1; 5:8; 6:10, 21; 2 Tim. 3:8; 4:7; Titus 1:13.
 - D. This faith, not any doctrine, has been delivered once for all to the saints.
 - E. For this faith we should contend—1 Tim. 6:12.
- VIII. We all need to “arrive at the oneness of the faith”—Eph. 4:13a:**
- A. The faith mentioned in this phrase is objective faith.
 - B. The oneness of the faith depends on our full knowledge of the Son of God—v. 13.
 - C. Only when we take Christ as the center and we focus on Him can we arrive at the oneness of the faith.

Message Four

Loving the Lord's Appearing by Maintaining Our Love for Him according to the Intrinsic Significance of Song of Songs

Scripture Reading: S. S. 1:2-4; 2:8-9; 3:9-10;
4:12-16; 6:10, 13; 7:11; 8:13-14

S. S. 1:2-4—Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! / For your love is better than wine. / ³Your anointing oils have a pleasant fragrance; / Your name is like ointment poured forth; / Therefore the virgins love you. / ⁴Draw 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.

S. S. 2:8-9—The voice of my beloved! Now he comes, / Leaping upon the mountains, / Skipping upon the hills. / ⁹My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart. / Now he stands behind our wall; / He is looking through the windows, / He is glancing through the lattice.

S. S. 3:9-10: King Solomon made himself a palanquin / Of the wood of Lebanon. / ¹⁰Its posts he made of silver; / Its bottom, of gold; / Its seat, of purple; / Its midst was inlaid with love / From the daughters of Jerusalem.

S. S. 4:12-16—A garden enclosed is my sister, my bride, / A spring shut up, a fountain sealed. / ¹³Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates / With choicest fruit; / Henna with spikenard, / ¹⁴Spikenard and saffron; / Calamus and cinnamon, / With all the trees of frankincense; / Myrrh and aloes, / With all the chief spices. / ¹⁵A fountain in gardens, / A well of living water, / And streams from Lebanon. / ¹⁶Awake, O north wind; / And come, O south wind! / Blow upon my garden: / Let its spices flow forth; / Let my beloved come into his garden / And eat his choicest fruit.

S. S. 6:10—Who is this woman who looks forth like the dawn, / As beautiful as the moon, / As clear as the sun, / As terrible as an army with banners?

S. S. 6:13—Return, return, O Shulammitte; / Return, return, that we may gaze at you. / Why should you gaze at the Shulammitte, / As upon the dance of two camps?

S. S. 7:11—Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields; / Let us lodge in the villages.

S. S. 8:13-14—O you who dwell in the gardens, / My companions listen for your voice; / Let me hear it. / ¹⁴Make haste, my beloved, / And be like a gazelle or a young hart / Upon the mountains of spices.

I. The subject of Song of Songs, a poem, is the history of love in an excellent marriage, revealing the progressive experience of an individual believer's loving fellowship with Christ for the preparation of His bride in six major stages—Rev. 19:7-9; Matt. 25:6-13; Rev. 3:18-22; Zech. 4:1-6, 11-14; 1 John 4:19; Psa. 110:3; 119:140:

A. In the first stage of Song of Songs, the lover of Christ is drawn to pursue Him for satisfaction (1:2—2:7); the Lord wants His seeker to have a personal, affectionate, private, and spiritual relationship with Him (1:2, 4); all the spiritual principles are contained in this first stage of the seeker's overcoming life; the lessons that follow are not new, but they are old lessons repeated in a deeper way.

B. In the second stage of Song of Songs, the lover of Christ is called to be delivered from the self through her oneness with the cross of Christ—2:8—3:5:

1. Song of Songs 2:8-9 speaks of the vitality of resurrection; in these verses Christ is likened to a gazelle or a young hart "leaping upon the

mountains, / Skipping upon the hills”; mountains and hills refer to difficulties and barriers, but nothing is too high or too great to stop the resurrected Christ; we need to seek for and know Christ’s mountain-leaping and hill-skipping presence.

2. The lover of Christ falls into introspection, which becomes a seclusion as a wall that keeps her away from the presence of Christ (v. 9b); hence, Christ encourages her to rise up and come out of her low situation to be with Him (vv. 10-13).
 3. It is by the power of resurrection, not by our natural life, that we, the lovers of Christ, are enabled to be conformed to His death by being one with His cross (vv. 14-15); in our mingled spirit we participate in and experience the resurrection of Christ, which enables us to be one with the cross to be delivered from the self and to be transformed into a new man in God’s new creation for the fulfillment of God’s economy in the building up of the organic Body of Christ (Rom. 8:2, 4, 29; Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17).
- C. In the third stage of Song of Songs, the lover of Christ is called to live in ascension as the new creation in resurrection—3:6—5:1:
1. To live in ascension is to live continually in our spirit; when we live in our spirit, we are joined to the ascended Christ in the heavens—Eph. 2:22; Gen. 28:12-17; John 1:51; Rev. 4:1-2; Heb. 4:12, 16 and footnote 1.
 2. By the Spirit’s transforming work in us, we become the moving vessel of Christ, the carriage of Christ, the “car” of Christ, for the move of Christ in and for the Body of Christ—S. S. 3:9-10; cf. 2 Cor. 2:12-17.
 3. We are rebuilt with the Divine Trinity so that our external structure is the resurrected and ascended humanity of Jesus, and our interior decoration is our love for the Lord—S. S. 3:9-10.
 4. Through her living in Christ’s ascension as the new creation in resurrection, the lover of Christ becomes mature in the riches of the life of Christ so that she can become a garden to Christ for His private enjoyment (4:12-15); she is prepared to give forth Christ’s fragrance in any circumstance or environment (v. 16).
- D. In the fourth stage of Song of Songs, the lover of Christ is called more strongly to live within the veil through the cross after resurrection—5:2—6:13:
1. By living within the veil, the lover of Christ is transformed into the heavenly bodies; she looks forth like the dawn, she is as beautiful as the moon, and she is as clear as the sun—v. 10.
 2. In the maturity of Christ’s life, the lover of Christ becomes the Shulamite (the feminine form of *Solomon*), signifying that she has become the same as He is in life, nature, expression, and function (but not in the Godhead) as the reproduction and duplication of Christ to match Him for their marriage—v. 13; 2 Cor. 3:18.
- E. In the fifth stage of Song of Songs, the lover of Christ shares in the work of the Lord—7:1-13:
1. Song of Songs 7:11 shows that Christ’s lover wants to carry out with her Beloved the work that is for the entire world (fields) by sojourning from one place to another (lodging in the villages); this indicates that she is not sectarian in carrying out the Lord’s work but keeps the work open, so that others can come to sojourn there and she can go to sojourn elsewhere; this is to keep one work in one Body.
 2. To share in the work of the Lord is to work together with Him (2 Cor. 6:1a); to work with Him, we need the maturity in life, we need to be one

with the Lord, and our work must be for His Body (Col. 1:28-29; 1 Cor. 12:12-27).

3. The Shulammitte works as Solomon's counterpart, taking care of all the vineyards (S. S. 8:11), the churches and the believers on the whole earth; we must have a work that is for the entire world; this is what Paul did by establishing local churches and then working to bring them into the full realization of the Body of Christ (Rom. 16:1-24).
- F. In the sixth stage of Song of Songs, the lover of Christ is hoping to be raptured (8:1-14); she is coming up from the wilderness (the earthly realm) by "leaning on her beloved" (v. 5):
1. *Leaning on her beloved* implies that, like Jacob, the socket of her hip has been touched, and her natural strength has been dealt with by the Lord—Gen. 32:24-25.
 2. *Leaning on her beloved* also implies that she finds herself pressed beyond measure, and this seems to last until the wilderness journey is over—2 Cor. 1:8-9; 12:9-10; 13:3-4.
 3. She asks her Beloved to set her as a seal on His heart of love and as a seal on His arm of strength; at this point she is conscious of her powerlessness and helplessness, and she realizes that everything depends on God's love and preserving power—S. S. 8:6-7.
 4. The lover of Christ asks Him who dwells in the believers as His gardens to let her hear His voice; this indicates that in the work that we do for the Lord as our Beloved, we need to maintain our fellowship with Him, always listening to Him—v. 13.

II. As the concluding word of this poetic book, the lover of Christ prays that her Beloved would make haste to come back in the power of His resurrection (gazelle and young hart) to set up His sweet and beautiful kingdom (mountains of spices), which will fill the whole earth—v. 14; Rev. 11:15; Dan. 2:35:

- A. Such a prayer portrays the union and communion between Christ as the Bridegroom and His lovers as the bride in their bridal love, in the way that the prayer of John, a lover of Christ, as the concluding word of the Holy Scriptures, reveals God's eternal economy concerning Christ and the church in His divine love—Rev. 22:20.
- B. "When He comes, faith will be turned to facts, and praise will replace prayer. Love will consummate in a shadowless perfection, and we will serve Him in the sinless domain. What a day that will be! Lord Jesus, come quickly!"—Watchman Nee, *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 23, "The Song of Songs," p. 126.

Message Five

**Receiving the Kingdom Reward of Christ
as the Crown of Righteousness**

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 4:7-8, 18; 3:2-5;
1 Cor. 9:25; Phil. 3:9; Psa. 45:13-14

2 Tim. 4:7-8: I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith. ⁸Henceforth 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.

2 Tim. 4:18: The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and will save me into His heavenly kingdom, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

2 Tim. 3:2-5: For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³Without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, savage, not lovers of good, ⁴Traitors, reckless, blinded with pride, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵Having an outward form of godliness, though denying its power; from these also turn away.

1 Cor. 9:25: And everyone who contends exercises self-control in all things; they then, that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we, an incorruptible.

Phil. 3:9: And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith.

Psa. 45:13-14: The king's daughter is all glorious within the royal abode; / Her garment is a woven work inwrought with gold. / ¹⁴She will be led to the King in embroidered clothing; / The virgins behind her, her companions, / Will be brought to You.

I. In order for us to enjoy Christ as our kingdom reward, we must love the Lord's appearing, which is His appearing and manifestation to us today and His presence with His people at His second coming, by staying on the constricted way of being watchful in life and faithful in service to be constituted as the bride of Christ—2 Tim. 4:7-8; Acts 26:16; Rom. 8:19; 1 Thes. 5:23; 2 Thes. 1:10; John 14:21, 23; Matt. 7:13-14; 24:3, 45-51; 25:9, 13, 21:

- A. Loving the Lord's appearing and loving the Lord Himself are inseparable—1 Cor. 2:9; 2 Tim. 4:8; John 14:21.
- B. In the prophetic picture presented in 2 Timothy 3:2-5 of Christianity in decline, four particular kinds of lovers are mentioned: lovers of self, lovers of money, lovers of pleasure, and lovers of God; whatever one loves, his whole heart, even his entire being, is set on and occupied and possessed by; this is crucial!
- C. Whether there would be a day of glory in the church's victory or grievous days of the church's decline depends altogether on what kind of lovers we are; history tells us that the root of the church's decline was the loss of her first love toward the Lord—Rev. 2:4.
- D. To maintain the victorious standard of the church, we must be lovers of God for the fulfillment of God's economy; the Lord has promised to give the crown of life and the inheritance of the kingdom to those who love Him—James 1:12; 2:5.
- E. The incorruptible crown is a symbol of glory and beauty given as a prize, in addition to the Lord's salvation, to the triumphant runner of the Christian race—1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Pet. 5:4; Isa. 28:5:
 1. This prize is neither of grace nor by faith, as salvation is (Eph. 2:8), but of righteousness through works (Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12; 2 Cor. 5:10).

2. The crown of righteousness will be awarded not according to the grace of the Lord but according to His righteousness, and the One who awards it will be the Lord as the righteous Judge—2 Tim. 4:8.

II. In order to be awarded with Christ as our crown of righteousness in the next age, we must experience and enjoy Him as our subjective, lived-out righteousness in this age—Phil. 3:9:

- A. There are two aspects of Christ being righteousness to the believers:
 1. Christ is our objective righteousness for us to be justified before God at the time of our repenting unto God and believing into Christ—Rom. 3:24-26; Acts 13:39; Gal. 3:24b, 27.
 2. Christ is also our subjective righteousness as the living out and genuine expression of Christ, which is the transcendent condition of expressing God by living Christ—Phil. 3:9; 1:21a.
- B. These two aspects of righteousness are typified by the two garments of the queen in Psalm 45:13-14:
 1. One garment corresponds to the objective righteousness, which is for our salvation—“her garment is a woven work inwrought with gold”—v. 13b:
 - a. This signifies that the Christ who has been dealt with through many sufferings and through death and resurrection becomes the righteousness of the church to meet the righteous requirement of God for her to be justified before God—1 Cor. 1:30; Luke 15:22; Jer. 23:6.
 - b. Her being covered with gold signifies the church’s appearing in the divine nature—Psa. 45:9b; 2 Pet. 1:4.
 2. The other garment corresponds with the subjective righteousnesses, which are for our victory—“she will be led to the King in embroidered clothing”—Psa. 45:14a; cf. Rev. 19:8; Matt. 22:11-12:
 - a. The overcoming believers are Christ’s corporate queen, taking Christ as their royal abode for them to be found in Christ and for Him to become their subjective righteousness—Psa. 45:13a; John 15:4a.
 - b. This embroidered clothing, another garment, the second layer of her covering, signifies that the church will be led to Christ at their marriage clothed with the righteousnesses of the saints to meet the requirement of Christ for their marriage—Rev. 19:8.
 - c. The raiment of embroidered work is the subjective Christ woven into our character, embroidered into our being, to be our lived-out righteousness.
 - d. This embroidery signifies the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, who is working day by day to embroider Christ into us stitch by stitch to be our wedding garment.
 - e. The degraded recovered church needs to pay the price to live Christ as her subjective righteousness that she may be clothed with Christ as her God-approved conduct—3:18.

III. “The Lord will...save me into His heavenly kingdom”—2 Tim. 4:18:

- A. The heavenly kingdom, which equals the crown of righteousness, is “the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43), “the kingdom of My Father” (26:29), “the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph. 5:5), and “the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:11), which will be a reward to the overcoming saints (Rev. 20:4).
- B. The overcoming believers will participate in the heavenly kingdom, the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens—Matt. 7:21:

1. As “the righteous,” the sons of the kingdom, the overcomers will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father—13:43.
2. In the heavenly kingdom the overcomers will drink the cup of the new covenant anew with their Lord—26:29.
3. In the kingdom of their Father the overcoming believers will feast with the Old Testament overcomers—8:11.
4. To the overcomers the heavenly kingdom will be a joyful inheritance—1 Cor. 6:9-10.
5. In the heavenly kingdom the overcomers will inherit eternal life and thereby have a fuller enjoyment of the divine life—Luke 18:29-30.
6. In the heavenly kingdom the overcomers will enter into the Lord’s joy and thus gain their soul, save their soul, and enjoy the salvation of their soul—Matt. 10:39; 16:25-26; 25:21, 23; Luke 9:24; Heb. 10:39; 1 Pet. 1:5, 9.
7. In the heavenly kingdom the overcoming believers will reign with Christ and rule over the nations—Rev. 20:4; 2:26-27.

