

WCCC 2022

Brother Godwin Sun

Knowing Christ as the Goal (3)

Thank the Lord for giving us another place to meet. We hope that the next gathering will be in heaven. May the Lord come quickly. Let us begin by reading the word of the Lord.

Philippians 3:10-14 That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will be disqualified.

2 Timothy 2:5 Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules

2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline (Discipline should be translated as a sound mind).

The burden that is entrusted to me this time is that “Knowing Christ as the Goal”. I feel this reminder in the Book of Philippians from Paul is extremely important, especially because we live in a very chaotic generation. It is a very dark generation. If we do not have a clear goal, there is too much confusion and too many temptations and lures. We can say that the saints today are going through a very difficult time because there are all sorts of things, both good and

bad, attracting their eyesight. Under such circumstances, it is paramount that we have a clear goal. Paul told us this goal is the Lord Himself. We have already mentioned that this goal is not any ideals, it is not any doctrine that you pursue after, but it is the living Christ. He is the real goal we pursue after. As children of God, many brothers and sisters do not care about many things of the world; but there are still many things outside of Christ that attract us. Therefore, Paul made special mention to the church in Philippi in the Book of Philippians that he had a clear goal. And every Christian ought to have this clear goal. I have already shared that God had changed Paul's goal on earth. Because his goal was changed, his living was changed also. As a result, the way he served was also changed.

In the first message we shared that Paul had four very important pursuits toward this goal. Paul told us we must pursue to know Christ, to gain Christ, to enjoy Christ, and to manifest Christ. Paul told us if we can live out Christ, then it is gain when we live, and it is also gain when we die. We must know that if we gain anything outside of Christ, these are not true gains.

Today, many desire to have great gifts to serve God. Not only Paul was very gifted, Peter was also the same. When Peter preached the gospel, three thousand were saved and five thousand were saved. Yet, Peter knew it was not the true goal he was pursuing after. The true goal of his pursuit was the Lord Himself. So brothers and sisters, it is okay if you do not have a gift, if you do not have much knowledge, if you do not have ability, and if you do not have eloquence. But as long as you are going toward this goal of gaining Christ, your life is gain. This is an extremely important matter. May the Lord Himself be our clear goal in this generation.

Not only was there a drastic transformation in Paul's living, but we can also see the Christ he had gained was so rich. The Lord Jesus was the beautiful land of Canaan to the Israelites; therefore, God led the Israelites to enter Canaan. The land of Canaan was a land of abundance flowing with milk and honey. This is the realm which Paul had entered. After Paul had met Christ, we see how his life became so rich and full since then. When we read the thirteen epistles of Paul, we feel how rich and full Paul was in Christ; yet Paul was not satisfied. Even when he was locked up in prison, he still had such a great desire in his heart toward the Lord: That I may know Christ. Dear brothers and sisters, may the Lord allow all saints to have the same pursuit.

This goal has not only changed Paul's way of living, but it has also transformed Paul's ministry. We mentioned yesterday, his service was out of the flesh before he met the Lord. His flesh was great. We see many who serve the

Lord have a great flesh at the beginning before they meet the Lord. Is it not the case in Moses? Moses lived in Egypt for forty years. He had eloquence, he had honor and wealth, and he had power. These forty years have nourished a great flesh in Moses. But this flesh is of no use in serving God so God had to change him. It was the same for Paul. He was a high achiever since he was young and he had great ambitions. He was also a very serious person. When he mentioned his past in the Book of Philippians, he said all that was out of the flesh and his service was a religious service. Since his encounter with Christ, he began knowing Him as his goal. Serving God must be in the spirit. Brothers and sisters, how important this is.

We shared that we need to serve God in our spirit yet there is this great difficult in the fallen man. That is our fallen soul. It has become the greatest problem for our spirit. That is why when there is a spiritual battle, we are not fighting any person outwardly, but it is a daily battle within us. The fiercest spiritual battle ground is overcoming the disturbances from the soul. We have shared how the mind is the most influential part in the soul. Jessie Penn Lewis had written a very good book called "The Battlefield of the Mind". Our mind is the true battlefield. Our mind is turning all day long and there are many corrupt matters inside of it. We often say that children daydream, but an of us can daydream. After I believed in the Lord for many years, one day I found myself daydreaming. Many thoughts were spinning in my head. This is the battleground and Satan wants to capture our mind. If he can capture our mind, then he can influence our living and our service. We serve the Lord with our spirit, yet the mind can create great disturbances.

Yesterday I mentioned the disturbances created by the soul are like fog. Something interesting about the pandemic is that it can create brain fog. When someone is infected with the virus, they will have brain fog, they will become confused and are not able to see clearly. The enemy will incite our mind and create fog. The entire world is under a thick fog. As Christians, if we have fog in our soul, there will be problems in our fellowship with God, and we will not be able to see with our spiritual eyes. Brothers and sisters, this is something very important.

There are two things in the Bible we need to be able to distinguish very clearly – one is the cloud, and the other is the fog. Clouds are heavenly, and fog is earthly. Our God often mentions the cloud. When Peter, James and John were on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared. Peter, being too excited, said, "Lord, let us build three tabernacles here!" When the heavenly Father heard this, He did not approve, and He used the clouds to cover the whole mountain. As a result, they looked up and only saw Jesus Himself.

The cloud refers to the cloud of the Holy Spirit, they are heavenly. In the Book of Hebrews, it says “such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us”. These people were within the cloud of the Holy Spirit. In their lives, they only saw Jesus. Only Jesus. Dear brothers and sisters, these are the Lord’s witnesses. Today, we need the great cloud of the Holy Spirit. We do not need the great fog raised by Satan. We need to ask the Spirit of the Lord to work. In the Old Testament, there are two occasions that mentioned about clouds: one is when the clouds suddenly appeared at the tabernacle, and the other time was in the temple. So, there is the difference between the clouds and the fog in the Bible. We look to the grace of the Lord that we will not have fog in our soul.

Paul told us that we need to finish the work of the cross through Jesus’ Spirit. Our soul needs to be dealt with. Yesterday I shared how Paul showed us very clearly the way to enter. We have all heard that we need to pick up our cross and follow the Lord. But when we come upon the cross, we do not know how to carry it. We say we need to deny ourselves, but we are not able to even though we try hard. Brothers and sisters, I have encountered this many times: When I came across hardship, I prayed to the Lord and said, “Lord, I need to die. Let me die with You.” But the more I prayed, the more alive I was. I wanted to die but I could not. It is harder when we are neither dead nor alive. When we die, we can rest. It is awful that we cannot die when we want to die and cannot live when we want to live. Later, the Holy Spirit said to me, “You still haven’t learnt it. Let me show you how to enter.” Then, the Holy Spirit helped me. As soon as I entered the death of Christ, I found rest immediately.

In Philippians 2, Paul told us the mind of Christ is a clear way. Every point of this way is clear. These are what we need to meditate upon every day. When we have learned this and put this into practice, our soul will be transformed for certain. When things happen, you will not be wailing and pleading, and you will be able to enter this way naturally. We thank God. We must serve with our spirit, but our soul must be dealt with.

Paul told us the spirit given to us by God is a spirit of power, love, and discipline. These words are for all the saints. The spirit which God gives us is the same. But what is the quality of the spirit? This depends on how your soul is dealt with. The deeper and boarder the dealing is with your soul, the better the quality your soul is. The spirit has its function but it is disturbed by the soul and cannot manifest its function. As Christians, we ought to pursue a high-quality spirit. Today, whether our service is good is closely connected with whether our spirit’s quality is good. It does not depend on whether you are smart; it does not depend on how knowledgeable you are; it does not depend on how

capable you are; it does not depend on eloquence. Brothers and sisters, we must know service is based on spirit. Therefore, Paul says that he serves in his spirit ever since he met Christ.

I have reviewed briefly what we have shared in the previous messages. Now I would like to enter today's last topic. This goal not only affects Paul's living and service, but Paul also told us we will gain a prize in the future if we press on towards this goal. This is a very special point in the Bible.

The word "prize" has only appeared twice in the Bible. Paul referenced this term that is used to describe a prize that is given at an athletic game. There was this famous athletic event during Paul's days. It was called the Isthmian Games. This event was very famous in Greece, even though it may not be as well known as the Olympic Games. It was nevertheless very famous at that time. Some of the events in these games attracted Paul's attention. There were not many events and there might only be five categories in total. Paul used three of these events in his message. Paul mentioned running, boxing, and wrestling. These are the three rather important events in the games at that time. I found it very interesting that Paul liked sports. Many brothers and sisters like sports and like to watch sporting events. But I can guarantee that Paul would never miss a meeting because of watching sports games. We know often we will hear about a very important sports event on television on Sunday, and many would skip going to church to stay home and watch the game. Do not use Paul as an excuse and say, "Paul loves the games too!" Paul would never let it affect his service.

Paul is a spiritual man, nevertheless, he is still a man. He is full of the flavor of a man. He is not like some of us who have lost all the flavor of a man because of our spiritual pursuit. Paul received revelation through these athletic events. One time I was invited to speak and it was a Sunday afternoon (They gathered on a Sunday afternoon). And it was Superbowl Sunday. I do not understand football. When I had just entered the meeting hall, a brother ran up to me looking worried. He said, "Brother Sun, the number of people coming to the meeting today may be very few because many are watching the Superbowl." I told him it was fine. Thank the Lord, quite a few people came that afternoon. It was a wonderful meeting, full of the Lord's presence. A brother came to me after the meeting and said, "Brother Sun, thank the Lord I came to the meeting! I was struggling the whole morning whether I should come to the meeting in the afternoon or to watch the game." Thank the Lord. Paul liked sports and he liked to watch the games, but this had never affected him. Not only did they not affect him, but he was also able to see something in these games that he could apply in Christians' spiritual pursuit.

Brothers and sisters, we see Paul mentioned these things in 1 Corinthians, in Philipians, and even in 2 Timothy. Let me give you a brief explanation of the Isthmian Games. The city of Corinth faced the sea and there was a small island in the sea. At a certain time every year, there would be low tide. When the tide receded, a road opened up between Corinth and the island. And every few years the games would be held on the island. Runners would run from Corinth to the island and then back to Corinth. This was an important event in the games. When the water receded, the road became very muddy. It was not as nice as the running tracks we have nowadays. And it was not easy for them to run on this road. Paul said, "Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim." The island was his aim. This is the background of Paul's words. The island was the goal.

Paul also said, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize?" I used to be very disappointed when I read these words in the past. "Why would you say this, Paul? Of course you would be the winner! How can we outrun you?" I remember many years ago I went to New York to visit Brother Kaung. I went to his home, and I sat down in his living room. When Brother Kaung came out from the bedroom, he said, "We could not catch up to Paul even if we try for our entire live." No matter how hard you try, you cannot catch up to Paul. I used to wonder why Paul would say only one receives the prize in the stadium. But there is more than one game in the stadium. And there are games in each generation. It is good that we are not competing with Paul because he will surely get the first prize. Later, I learned from some studies done by Bible scholars. The games in those days were very unique. All the runners ran. As long as you were able to run to the island and return, everyone received a prize. Since this is the case, I still have hope. It will do if you finish the race. This is the mind of our Lord. When you finish the course measured by the Lord, you will receive a prize. Of course, we understand this is an encouragement from Paul, to encourage us to run well.

Paul used the Isthmian Games to illustrate spiritual matters. Those who follow the Lord, Christians saved by grace, we are all on the field. Brothers and sisters, please remember there are no spectators on the field. We are not spectators. It seems like many brothers and sisters act like they are spectators, and only the ones at the pulpit are the runners. You are the cheerleaders. You say, "You are running well!" and you clap for us. "Go. Go." You sit there and watch. No, brothers and sisters. Perhaps the angels are watching, and the world cannot understand it. But all brothers and sisters are in the stadium. Brothers and sisters, we are all on the field, we are not spectators. We must all run.

Paul also saw people boxing. Boxing is not beating the air. I did not understand this before. Later, I had a friend in high school who was a boxer and he told me, "When we box, it is the hardest to beat the air. We exert most energy

when we are beating the air.” Then I understood the meaning of Paul’s words. Many Christians serve without an aim today and they are beating the air. And the Book of Ephesians speaks of wrestling. This wrestling is fierce. We wrestle with the prince of the power of the air. Among all the sports events, wrestling is the most close-contact sport. You grab hold of me, and I grab hold of you. It is not easy.

Paul used these events at the Isthmian Games in his messages. He said that as we press on towards this goal, we would receive a prize in the future. Speaking of this prize, I feel that not many brothers and sisters value it. We know we need to love and serve the Lord. But what is this receiving a prize in the future? Many have neglected this in our daily lives and not many brothers and sisters mention receiving a prize. But the fact is that there is a prize.

Brothers and sisters, let me share a Chinese story with you. The Qin Dynasty was a very weak nation originally. Then, the king raised up a person to be the prime minister. If you know Chinese history, you will know this famous person’s name was Shangyan. He saw how weak this nation was and he wanted to govern it well. He ruled by law so the nation would become strong. But in order to rule by the law, the people had to trust the law. If the people did not trust the law, it was useless to establish the law. At that time, the people did not trust the government at all. They paid no attention to what the king or the officials said, and the nation became very weak. In order to establish people’s trust toward the government, he did something. It is very famous: He placed a wooden log in the square of the nation’s capital, and the log was light enough for one person to pick it up. He then gathered all the people and said, “Here is this log. Whoever picks it up and carries this log to the North Gate will receive ten pieces of gold.” Do you know how valuable ten pieces of gold were? During that time, ten pieces of gold could buy you a manor. That was a large sum of money. The people had never heard of such a thing. They thought he was trying to fool them. And no one wanted to try. As a result, Shangyan kept increasing the amount of money. How much did he increase the reward eventually? One hundred pieces of gold! It can be used to purchase ten manors. Still, no one was stirred. At last, there was this young man whose grandfather was ill. He loved his grandfather, and they were poor. He was willing to give it a try even if he might be fooled. So, he went over and picked up the log. Everyone laughed at him. He carried it all the way to the North Gate. When he arrived at the North Gate, Shangyan gave him one hundred pieces of gold as promised. Everyone was green with envy.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord said that there would be a prize in the future. Do you believe it? Are you willing to pursue in such a way? We see many Christians just simply don’t care. What is this prize? It seems Paul referred to it as the crown of righteousness. It seems to me many brothers and sisters do not

long for it when they read about it. Why does it matter in eternity that you have a crown on your head and I don't? Is that so, brothers and sisters? No! We are certain that this prize has to do with Christ. I cannot tell you what the crown is. But bear in mind, if we do not receive the crown, you will surely regret it. You will regret with the gnashing of teeth. Brothers and sisters, Paul had sublime ideals. He was not speaking of something lowly and base. While we still have not much time on earth, may the Lord stir our hearts so we will love the Lord Himself and be aspired to win the prize with our living and service.

Paul told us this was an upward call. This was not an earthy call. We know there are the Olympic Games every four years and numerous athletes were called. Even now these athletes are in the process of training. They all want to gain gold medals at the Olympics. Brothers and sisters, Paul told us he was not influenced by anything on earth. He heard this calling on high to gain the prize. This is not a calling from man. Paul said that man could only receive a perishable wreath on earth. Ours are imperishable. May the Lord let us hear this upward call. We are indeed living in a very confusing time. Most of God's children are in deep slumber. We are very casual about the Lord's matters. We do not care. May the Lord wake each brother and sister up at this conference. Brothers and sisters, wake up and hear this upward calling! These are pressing times.

I am often reminded of the parable given by the Lord. The Lord said that a landowner called men to work in his vineyard. He called a group to go to the vineyard in the morning. He called another group at noon. And he called another group in the afternoon. It was agreed upon that he would give them each a denarius. Even at the eleventh hour, the landowner called a group of men to work in the vineyard. When it came the time to pay the workers, everyone was paid a denarius. Those who entered the vineyard early in the day complained to the landowner, "You are unfair! We worked all day and only received a denarius. This man only worked for an hour and he received the same." Brothers and sisters, what is this referring to? This specifically refers to the saints in the end times. The Lord is giving us tremendous grace. Others have worked the whole day and we only need to work for an hour and we both receive the same prize. When you receive your prize on that day, even Paul will envy you. May our hearts be encouraged. May the Lord help us hear His call. May each one of us hear this upward call during this conference. Paul heard this call and began to press on toward the goal.

Paul knew there were many conditions for someone to become a great athlete. Of course, you must first be very fit physically to compete. Second, you must have very good techniques. In order to gain a prize, the athletes must repeat a single movement for thousands of times when they train. They train from morning to evening, to a point, just as Paul said, they would buffet the body to

lead it captive. The runners train to a point when their legs listen to them. What are the techniques they use that even the muscles will cooperate and do the movements they want them to do? These are just the basic requirements.

Paul mentioned two very important matters. These are the things brothers and sisters should learn and pay attention to. First, self-control. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul told us everyone exercises self-control in all things in order to receive a prize. This tells us the daily living of a good athlete is not casual. Paul wished to be a good athlete and he fought with the flesh every day. He must buffet his body and lead it captive. How do we train our spiritual body today? Thank the Lord, in Galatians 5, Paul told us self-control is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in order to learn self-control, we need to follow the Holy Spirit closely. We all know that it is useless to will on our flesh. In Romans 7, Paul already told us there is nothing we can accomplish in our flesh. When we were young, the brothers exhorted us to pursue the Lord well. So, we willed to get up at a certain time in the morning, and to read a certain amount of the Bible, to pray several times a day, and to preach the gospel a certain number of times in a week. Those young brothers and sisters all made a list for themselves. I also made a list but I only did it for three days. I could not continue on the fourth day. I could not do it on the fourth day so I told the Lord I owed Him one day and I would make it up on the fifth day. But I was not able to make it up on the fifth day. As a result, I continued to owe the Lord. I owed Him more and more and I gave up at the end. There were so many times we willed, and so many times we failed. Later, I realized this was the wrong way. The Lord did not ask us to suffer. We have forgotten the Holy Spirit dwells within us. He is the best trainer. He abides in us and all we need to do is to obey Him. I discovered as long as I was obedient to the Holy Spirit, He would give me grace to achieve my goal. How wonderful this is.

Brothers and sisters, Apostle John wrote 1 John in his last years. We are all familiar with 1 John 2. John told us we need to obey the teaching of the anointing. If we obey the teaching of the anointing, you will not need anyone to teach you. We always hope others can teach us. But even if others do not teach you, you will be able to follow if you obey the teaching of the anointing. This is something living and it can happen at any time. We can learn this today. This is the most important experience in our spiritual living. What is spiritual living? Spiritual living is living that obeys the teaching of the anointing. What is spiritual service? It is a service out of obeying the teaching of the anointing. God truly loves us. He does not give us a hard time. He knows how weak we are. He knows how big our flesh is. He, therefore, sends the Holy Spirit to abide in us and teaches us in all things. Brothers and sisters, we must follow the teaching of the anointing very closely in our daily lives.

When I was young, the Lord taught me in this aspect. I had learned so many lessons, and brothers and sisters are familiar with some of the stories. When I used to throw things on the ground casually, the Lord would teach me a lesson. Once I received the lesson, my entire life was changed. Even in these last couple of days, I have learned some lessons. These were very minor lessons. One day I was walking to the meeting place, I saw a face mask on the floor. I did not know which brother or sister left it there and I walked past it. There was this prompting within me, "Pick it up." Then I went to pick it up. The teaching of the anointing is so meticulous. When we speak of spiritual matters, we often refer to something big, we do not talk about these trivial things. Brothers and sisters, it does not matter whether the matter is big or small. What matters is whether you obey. The Lord is teaching us to be obedient. If you are restrained by the Holy Spirit, you will naturally learn self-control. It will be easy for us to attain. Do not neglect the Spirit Who abides in us.

Dear brothers and sisters, I have this deep feeling within me in these years. There is this sighing. It seems these basic lessons are lost among God's people. We meet every day and we serve every day, yet we seem to have lost our obedience to the Holy Spirit. It seems like we do not have much of this teaching. I thank my Lord that many older brothers had given us such teaching when I was young. Even though we may not have learnt this well, we have begun to learn regardless. Today, if we wish to have a change in our spiritual life, we must learn this very basic spiritual lesson. From this moment on, obey the teaching of the anointing, then you will naturally learn self-control. There are many aspects in the church that need to be recovered, but they are all the most basic matters.

Paul not only mentioned self-control. In 2 Timothy, he told us that if anyone competes as an athlete, he competes according to the rules. I believe you all know very well that the rules are very strict when you compete in an athletic event. Without the rules, it will not be fun to watch these games. It will just be a mess. Why are there so many referees? Their eyes are watching to see if you are observing the rules. They will blow their whistles if anyone breaks a rule. We see there are often quarrels between the athletes and the referees. You must have rules. All games have rules. Without rules, sports will not be sports. Paul said he would gain the crown of righteousness in the future. If you wish to gain the medal, you must be righteous. It will not work if you do whatever you want. Therefore, we understand rules are very important.

If you violate the rules, all the effort you put in in the past will be in vain. One time I was watching the Olympic games. I was not watching the whole game but was just watching a segment and I saw this. It was a running race. Everyone was at the starting line. I forgot which country this particular athlete was from. He had a false start and was caught. He was disqualified. I saw the very

sorrowful expression on his face. Not only this, but he also kept banging his head against the wall. This scene left a very deep impression on me until today. Because he broke a rule, all the hard work he put in in the past four years went down the drain. Brothers and sisters, do you know it is the same in spiritual matters? It does not matter how much you have done, if you break the rules and if you do not do according to the Lord's word. Please remember our God is righteous. Do not think you can just slack off. Some brothers and sisters do not love the Lord. When they are at the gate of heaven, they think they can mix in with the crowd and enter heaven that way. Please remember the word of the Lord. The Lord says each shall be judged according to his deeds. These words appear eight times in the New Testament. These are serious words!

We must be familiar with the principles of God. All God's principles are in the Bible. Why do we need to read the Bible? It is in order to be familiar with God's rules, and to know what God's will is in Christ. Therefore, we need to follow the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit opens up God's word and reveals Christ's meaning. Then we will understand God's word and His rules. Brothers and sisters, this is so important. Paul told us we must do according to the rules on this way, which is according to God's rules. Only when you are familiar with the rules then you can run the right way. It will not do if we run the wrong way when we compete in a race. If you run the wrong way, you run in vain. Sometimes, we see runners running chaotically. All runners have their own lane. This is why there are lines on the track. You cannot run in another runner's lane. You must run in the right lane. In spiritual matters, it is even more important that you are running the right way. Church history tells us some were disqualified because they ran the wrong way. Even some big groups ran the wrong way and all those followed were forsaken by God.

The church in Jerusalem did well in the beginning, but when legalism entered, God put her aside. And God raised up the church in Antioch. It is very important for us to run the right way today. When we read church history, when the apostles were present during the 1st century, all the churches were doing well in general. In the 2nd century, changes happened. The way has changed. The changes eventually turned the church into Catholicism. Once this happened, there was darkness for one thousand years. God used Martin Luther to bring about a recovery. This brought about recovery in individuals' experiences but the way of the church was yet to be recovered. It was not until the Brethren Movement that the brothers were able to see the way more clearly. Therefore, I feel the recovery of the Brethren Movement was a recovery of the way.

Among God's children today, the greatest distinction is the matter of the way. If you talk about loving the Lord, there is preaching of loving the Lord everywhere. If you talk about consecration, many brothers and sisters have consecrated

themselves. If you speak of suffering, many brothers and sisters suffer much more than we do. They lead a cleaner spiritual life than we do. They are more eloquent preachers than we are. What is the distinction? The distinction is in the way. What we insist on is the matter of the way. God has His way. Brothers and sisters, how we need God's grace.

Many young brothers and sisters often would raise questions. "We sing two hymns and give a sermon here. The other congregation also sings two hymns and gives a sermon. It feels like their preaching is better than yours. Why should I stay here?" Brothers and sisters, how do you answer them? We know very clearly in our heart that this is a matter of the way. We are on different ways. Even though we are weak, we are not gifted, our living is worse than others, we have the heart to hold fast to the Lord's way. I often say to these young people, "It is not that we have arrived. It is not that we are and others are not. We cannot say such a thing. But we see the Lord has a way in the Bible and we have a desire to walk this way. This is the purpose of our gathering."

So, what is the Lord's way? I can tell you briefly. This way needs to at least include three principles. Firstly, this is the way of life. Even though we are not doing very well, we know we are not emphasizing knowledge here. What we emphasize is life. What we require is that everything is alive and is based on life. When we sing hymns, there needs to be life. When we pray, there needs to be life. When we preach, there needs to be life. When we serve, there needs to be life. Every brother and sister needs to live in life. We must hold fast to the way of life.

Secondly, it is the way of the cross. The way of the cross is to forsake the self. All brothers and sisters who serve the Lord do not have their own interest and they do not have their own determination. We must put the self to death, submitting to the leading of the Lord, and submitting to the Holy Spirit. We have already spoken much on the lessons of the cross. We must learn these lessons well before the Lord. No one exalts themselves in the church. We all honor the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. Christ is our Head. This is not a doctrine. We must hold fast to this.

Thirdly, this is a more outstanding point -- we walk the way of the body. All brothers and sisters are God's children. We are all brothers and sisters. We are not a system. Others have pastors and we do not. It is not because we want to stand out. The Bible tells us we only have one Heavenly Father and we are all brothers and sisters in God's household. We are also members of Christ's body. Everyone has a different function. Therefore, we do not agree with the clergy system. Every brother or sister is a priest. We all should serve the Lord. These

are, at least, the three important points regarding the way of the Lord. These are the guides along this way.

When God's children were lost, Jeremiah said to them in Jeremiah 31:21, "Set up for yourself roadmarks, Place for yourself guideposts. Direct your mind to the highway, The way by which you went. Return, O virgin of Israel, Return to these your cities." Jeremiah mentioned these roadmarks and guideposts. The three points we just mentioned are the roadmarks and the guideposts. May we be able to find these roadmarks to go forward in the way of the Lord. In order to be an athlete who wins the prize, not only do you need to have self-control, but you also need to know the rules.

There is another important point. As you are in the lane, you need to strive forward, forgetting what is behind, and to press on toward the goal. Once the runners start running, they forget everything else. They strive forward with all their strength toward the goal. Paul was the same. When Paul saw the runners running in the field, he felt that we ought to do the same in the spiritual field. He said to forget what lies behind and reach forward to what lies ahead. This tells us we can never look back. The Lord said that those who put his hand to the plow and look back are not fit for the kingdom of God.

Brothers and sisters, why can't we look back? Remember this story in the Book of Genesis. Lot and his family lived in Sodom. God was about to destroy Sodom but had mercy upon them and had an angel bring the family out. The angel brought them out and told them to run for their lives and not to turn back. They ran out of the city. But Lot's wife turned around to look and she became a pillar of salt. The Bible gives us such a solemn reminder. If the Lord returns today, do you still have anything you cannot let go of? This is the way to follow the Lord. You must not turn around to look back. There is no longer anything in this world we should linger over. If you still linger over things of this world, you cannot receive the prize. Brothers and sisters, "turn and look back" is such a reminder! Therefore, Paul said to forget what lies behind and run forward. This is the mindset of a runner.

All those who compete in a game have a very strong will to compete, and they are very energetic. It tells us we must have a powerful spirit. Regardless of the circumstance, regardless of the situation, no matter how things change, we must have a spirit of power within us to follow the Lord and to reach the goal. We must run forward, have a right direction, and never get lost. Some brothers and sisters started well but later did not know where they were running to. Brothers and sisters, we must not be lost. The Lord's words are very clear and His way is very clear. We need to run according to this way and press on.

There is only one thing. The athletes who are in a competition also only have one thing in mind. They cannot think of a second thing. While Paul was living, he pressed on in the way of the Lord. In Acts 20, when he was leaving Asia, he said to the elders in Ephesus that he did not care for his life but to finish his course. It did not matter how many difficulties were ahead of him.

Brothers and sisters, we are at the end times. There is only a little while. A little while. When we come to the last leg of the race, we ought to sprint. May the Spirit of the Lord fill us so that our spirit will prosper. We will press on at the last leg. At Paul's last days, he wrote in 2 Timothy that he had finished the course. We must finish running the course. How we need the Lord's grace. We must not give up halfway. We have heard so many sermons all these years, we are the ones who know the heart of God. If we know of it and cannot attain it, how regretful we will be in the future! We look to the mercy of the Lord.

Paul had this clear goal. He pressed on toward this goal. He focused all his attention on it. Not only were his living and service toward Christ, but he also heard the upward calling. He pressed on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. And there is also this great reminder. This prize is in Christ. If you love anything outside of Christ or if you do anything outside of Christ, you will not receive this prize. This conference will end very soon. May our gaze be fixed on the Lord's kingdom. We have come to the gate of the kingdom of heaven. May the Lord use Paul's experience to encourage us so every brother and sister would run toward the goal.

Let us bow our heads with a further word of prayer.

Lord, we thank You with all our hearts. You have left us here in this end times. We know the footsteps of Your return are very close. Lord, give us this desire, that we long to enter the kingdom of heaven and we long to receive the prize from You. Lord, may You be our very clear goal today. It does not matter how dark and confusing this generation is. Lord, You are always before us and You guide us forward. May the Spirit of God give us strength. When Your kingdom comes, all brothers and sisters can enter the kingdom. We can meet You with joy and gladness. All of us can receive a prize from You. Please bless Your words. Thank You for Your care and for Your keeping. We place the way ahead of us into Your hands. Listen to our prayers. In the precious name of Jesus Christ. Amen.