

FAITH IN MIND

By Sengcan

Commentary by Daniel Scharpenburg



“Simultaneously practice stillness and illumination. Carefully observe, but see nothing, see no body, and see no mind. For the mind is nameless, the body is empty, and all things are dreams. There is nothing to be attained, no enlightenment to be experienced. This is called liberation.”

-Sengcan

[Faith In Mind](#) is a long poem about Enlightenment. It was written by the third Chan Patriarch, Sengcan. We use the word ‘faith’, but of course it’s not about faith in some external thing. It’s about faith in our own minds, our inherent Buddha Nature. I think we could substitute the word ‘confidence’ instead.

Most of the large Chan texts were written after the time of the great sixth patriarch. ‘Faith in Mind’ is one of the rare exceptions.

Sengcan lived in the late 500s and early 600s. He’s said to have written this poem and passed it on to his student, the fourth patriarch.

This poem comes down to us as a guide for meditation. It’s significant not only because it’s a very concise guide, but also because it inspired so many later works. One of the things I like to do is explore these earliest texts, to get a feel for where things came from.

‘Faith in Mind’ has an important meaning. It’s really emphasized in the Chan tradition. Faith in mind is just a grounded belief that our true nature is Enlightened, that we share the same basic essence as all things, that it’s only our delusions that cause us to perceive separation. In the midst of our delusion we don’t see our true minds.

Sengcan tries to show us, in this poem, how to take our minds and turn them, turning them away from delusion and toward our inherent Enlightenment, which is always with us and has been with us the whole time. He is going to tell us how to go from the shore of suffering and defilement to the shore of awakening and freedom. We get there, of course, by realizing we’re already there.

BEGINNING THE PRACTICE

The Supreme Way is not difficult

If only you do not pick and choose.

Neither love nor hate,

And you will clearly understand.

Be off by a hair,

And you are as far from it as heaven from earth.

This is how Sengcan's poem "Faith in Mind" begins. It's about cultivating equanimity and practicing without a goal in mind.

The Supreme Way at the beginning refers to Enlightenment. The wisdom of the Buddha, the wisdom of Emptiness seems really hard for us to grasp. But the teachings tell us that Buddha nature is our true nature, that we have the awakened state already.

The second line tells us what stops us from realizing our awakened state. Picking and choosing. I want this, I don't want that. What I call the mind that says "I-Me-Mine" all the time. We often make our problems worse when we try to get out of them, especially when we pretend they don't exist.

The third and fourth lines tell us that if we can get away from this "I-Me-Mine" mentality, then Enlightenment is ours. It's said that if we stop thinking with this dualistic mind, then we can immediately awaken.

This relates to our sitting practice. When we sit, sometimes we don't want to. Sometimes we are distracted. We think about things we'd rather be doing. That's the mind of picking and choosing.

Putting great importance on likes and dislikes can tend to get in the way of our practice. If we can just let things happen and let the world unfold as it is, then we will be happier.

There's a saying that goes: "Put down the myriad thoughts. Take up the practice." The myriad thoughts are all those things that take us out of our practice. And we want to think about these other things. We want to be distracted.

That's what we're talking about here. When we are engaged in sitting practice, but our monkey minds take us all over the place, that's picking and choosing. Our minds are trying to choose anything but sitting still.

Sengcan's point is that just keeping in mind, "Avoid picking and choosing" can be helpful to us.

If you want the Way to appear,

Be neither for nor against.

For and against opposing each other –

This is the mind's disease.

We should see the world as it is, not as we wish it to be. So often we are overcome by our expectations. There's a quote that's usually attributed to Shakespeare that says, "Expectation is the root of all heartache." That could easily be a Buddhist message.

Our preferences include anything we want to have and also anything we want to avoid. Although like and dislike are opposites, they really come from the same root. That root is expecting the world to follow our wishes.

Without recognizing the mysterious principle

It is useless to practice.

If we don't realize the harm that expectation brings to us, then our efforts in practice will not get us very far. As the Buddha said, "The cause of suffering is attachment." That's what this is about. Our attachments to our expectations.

The Way is perfect like great space,

Without lack, without excess.

Because of grasping and rejecting,

You cannot attain it.

Great space refers to Emptiness. It is one of those ideas that people sometimes struggle to understand. It doesn't mean there's nothing, but that there's nothing for us to cling to. All things are connected. Everything is included. There is no gain and loss because all things are interconnected. There is nothing outside of us.

I like to think of that in terms of one of my favorite songs. In what I think is a lesser known song the Beatles said, "Love is all and love is everyone."

If we can just stop grasping we can come to realize that there is no excess or lack. Then we can just let the universe unfold.

Do not pursue conditioned existence;

Do not abide in the acceptance of emptiness.

People can be attached to worldly things or attached to Emptiness.

In the Buddha's life story it's said that he grew up having every worldly pleasure imaginable. It's said that his father kept reality hidden from him, so he grew up with no knowledge of suffering, illness, or death. I think it's a little far-fetched that it could have been quite that extreme BUT I can imagine that he was a very spoiled child, having his every whim catered to because he was royalty.

That is attachment to worldly things. The historical Buddha didn't find fulfillment even though he had everything. What do you do when you have everything?

So he tried the opposite. He learned from some spiritual teachers in the forest who told him the road to Enlightenment was in giving up everything, giving up all worldly pleasures.

So he tried that. He stopped eating, stopped taking care of his body, and did marathon meditation sessions, thinking that this would bring him to Enlightenment.

This is attachment to Emptiness. And he found that that didn't fulfill him either. Giving up everything just made him sick, it didn't bring Enlightenment.

The text here is telling us we shouldn't be attached to worldly things but we also shouldn't be attached to spiritual things.

These are both forms of attachment, although they seem different.

In oneness and equality,

Confusion vanishes of itself.

Seeing that all is one means transcending distinctions, seeing that there's really no difference between the shore of suffering and the other shore. It's so hard. When you can come to an Enlightenment experience, that all things are connected, then your delusions will naturally fade. The truth is that Emptiness and existence aren't separate, certainly not as separate as we think they are.

Stop activity and return to stillness,

And that stillness will be even more active.

Originally we might think our minds are relatively stable. When we try to still the mind we come to realize that it's not stable at all. Our mind jumps around all the time, consistently losing focus

on what we're trying to do. That's why it's sometimes referred to as "monkey mind". Like a monkey, jumping from tree to tree and never sitting still.

When we are meditating, we want to focus completely on the practice and avoid thinking about how well we're doing or how much trouble we're having. We need to practice with an even mind and especially not beat ourselves up when we are having difficulty.

UNIFYING THE MIND WITH SILENCE

Merely stagnating in duality,

How can you recognize oneness?

If you fail to penetrate oneness,

Both places lose their function.

When we make distinctions between this and that our minds enter duality. Even striving for Enlightenment is, in itself, something that can put us in a position of thinking about subject and object. We tend to think that the person who seeks Enlightenment is separate from the goal. In seeking to become like the Buddha, we often separate ourselves from him. We think of our goal as somewhere else instead of as something that's with us here.

If we can put ourselves in the mind of seeing no separation, then we can reach the state of non-duality. That's what we're talking about in the title "Faith in Mind". We have a faith in the ultimate non-duality of things, that we are one with the world around us.

Our main emphasis, though, is on practice, not speculation. The goal of our meditation practice, if there can be said to be a goal, is to come to a unified, or one pointed state of mind. If we can get to the point when we transcend thoughts, then we can dwell in stillness. This is where we come to see things as they really are.

Our practice has been described as progressing in a sequence: from scattered mind to simple mind, from simple mind to one mind, and from one mind to no mind.

We start by gathering our scattered thoughts into a more simple state of mind. Next we take our simple mind into the mind of unity, then we take the unified mind to the state beyond mind, beyond thoughts.

To pass from mind to the state of no mind doesn't mean that we are losing anything. It means that we are free, we aren't held back by our thoughts.

Banish existence and you fall into existence;

Follow emptiness and you turn your back on it

This is a challenge to stop us from being too goal oriented in our practice. We just practice and don't think about Enlightenment all the time. We don't overcome our delusions by fighting them. We overcome them by accepting and understanding them.

If we are struggling to overcome our delusions, then we are banishing existence and falling into existence.

“Follow emptiness and you turn your back on it.” refers to those experiences of awakening that we have on the path, when we think we are attaining Enlightenment we sometimes are manifesting attachment.

The Daodejing says “The Dao that can be spoken of is not the eternal Dao.”

That's what we're talking about here. Emptiness is not real Emptiness if we sit around philosophizing about how great the concept is. It's something we have to experience ourselves by stilling our minds.

Excessive talking and thinking

Turn you from harmony with the Way.

Cut off talking and thinking,

And there is nowhere you cannot penetrate.

We like to talk a lot. Especially in Buddhist circles, people philosophize endlessly. We can talk and talk about things like Emptiness and Enlightenment without actually practice. There are plenty of armchair philosophers and I think there were plenty even in Sengcan's time.

But this is about retreats. Our purpose, during our practice, is to be silent. We try to still our speech while we are stilling our minds. This is why retreats our silent. It's hard to keep a still mind if you're stopping for some chatter every few hours. This applies to shorter practice periods as well. We seem to talk too much, although these days it's as often facebook and tweets as it is actual verbal chatter. When we are practicing we want to just practice.

It is only when words and thoughts stop that we manifest our innate Enlightenment. We transcend delusion by stilling the mind.

“there is nowhere you cannot penetrate” doesn’t really mean we’re trying to get anywhere. We’re already there. We can come to the state of no thought in any context. We just have to put down the delusion we are carrying.

Return to the root and attain the principle;

Pursue illumination and you lose it.

One moment of reversing the light

Is greater than previous emptiness.

It’s only by turning our focus within that we get to the meaning of things. When we look for awakening as something outside of ourselves, we run into trouble.

The root we are talking about is our Buddha nature. We return to it by letting go of the words and concepts, the attachment and aversion, that keeps us distracted all the time. When we transcend these distractions our true nature manifests.

The previous emptiness is transformed;

It was all a produce of deluded views.

No need to seek the real;

Just extinguish your views.

Sengcan is telling us the same thing over and over. The previous Emptiness is when we think of Enlightenment as something other, something away from ourselves that we are trying to get to. It’s hard to think in a different way because we really don’t feel very Enlightened. It’s even our attachment to concepts like Enlightened and ordinary that we have to give up.

Thinking “When am I going to get Enlightened?” can take us further away from our true nature. That’s why some of the sutras say, “No attainment and nothing to attain.”

We must simply strive forth with diligence and not try to achieve all the time.

Do not abide in dualistic views;

Take care not to seek after them.

As soon as there is right and wrong

The mind is scattered and lost.

Dualistic views refers to our mind that discriminates. These include doubts about our ability to practice, which many of us have. Too often when we're on the cushion we might come up with the idea "my mind will never settle". That is a dualistic view.

The fact of the matter is that we aren't practicing to attain Enlightenment. We're really practicing just to practice. If we can think of things in that way, then our practice is in good shape. If we struggle with that, we might be in trouble.

This aspect of right and wrong could, I think, be misunderstood. We're talking about the mind puts labels on things, that tries to put the whole world into neat little categories.

The universe just doesn't work that way. We put labels on things and then assume that those labels are real. We forget that we created them in the first place.

Two comes from one,

Yet do not even keep the one.

When one mind does not arise,

Myriad dharmas are without defect.

Our method, meditation practice, helps us focus our minds, to replace our constant discursive thoughts with clear thinking. After we have practiced for a long time, we reach the point where even the method itself disappears and we are able to just be, just to dwell in oneness.

The one that's referred to in this section is our true nature, our inherent oneness. The Avatamsaka Sutra says: "With no exception everything comes from the Dharma Realm. With no exception everything will return to the Dharma Realm." The Dharma Realm is Enlightenment.

Everything comes from Emptiness and returns to Emptiness. Everything is interdependent and we can come to an understanding of this.

We come to this state of oneness, and even that is said to drop away. And we come to the mind of no mind, the mind before thinking.

A famous Zen master named Wu Kwang once said, "Open mouth, already a mistake." He's saying, I think, that these concepts are so difficult at times, that even talking about them is usually a mistake. We should just practice.

Without defect, without dharmas,

No arising, no mind.

No arising is a state where we have control of our minds, where these discursive thoughts stop showing up all the time to distract us. It's in this state that our practice can really take off.

The state beyond thought is where Enlightenment is.

The subject is extinguished with the object.

The object sinks away with the subject.

Our thoughts are illusory. They all depend on causes and conditions all the time. That's what we're talking about with subjects and objects. If there were not objects or symbols in our minds, then there would be no illusory thoughts.

Object is object because of the subject;

Subject is subject because of the object.

Know that two

Are already originally one emptiness.

In one emptiness the two are the same

Containing all phenomena.

This describes a mind that doesn't discriminate. If we can dwell in awakening, then we can see things from the standpoint of Emptiness.

Everything absolutely depends on everything else. It's hard to see things from that point of view, but it is the case.

COMPARISONS AND ANXIETY

Not seeing fine or coarse,

How can there be any bias?

Fine or coarse refers to the depth or shallowness of our practice. If we're practicing to practice, then we aren't worried about whether our meditation is deep or shallow. We aren't sitting to attain Enlightenment. We are sitting because that is how Enlightenment manifests itself. That's an important distinction.

This applies in other ways. Good and bad are the most common labels that we use. We compare everything all the time. We compare ourselves to others far too often. As long as we are

comparing things, we will have trouble practicing. All comparison is rooted in delusion, especially when these labels become really important to us.

If we dwell in enlightenment then we don't see things as 'good' or 'bad'. We just see everything as it really is.

The Buddha sometimes described the human mind as like a mirror. It doesn't have an image of its own, but it reflects whatever is put in front of it. One who is really involved in practice can become like a clear mirror, reflecting everything without our labels and preconceptions.

The Great Way is broad,

Neither easy nor difficult.

Easy and difficult are still labels, of course. It's easy to think of the path as difficult, of course. Some of these concepts are really deep and hard to grasp. But it's our true nature. It simply is there beneath our delusion. We just have to turn our minds to notice it.

With narrow views and doubts,

Haste will slow you down.

It's a common problem on the path that people start to doubt themselves. A lot of people come to think they can't still the mind or expand awareness, so they give up on their practice pretty early on.

A lot of times when people find out I teach meditation they say things like, "That's really great. I just can't get my mind to settle down."

That's a narrow view and doubt. Giving up when you can't still your mind right away is like starting out going to the gym and quitting when you can't lift 100 pounds right away.

If we practice diligently we start to work through this doubt.

"Haste will slow you down" means that if we are really impatient with our practice, if we really want results right away, that will harm our practice. Again, as I said before, we aren't practicing to attain anything. We are practicing to practice.

Attach to it and you lose the measure;

The mind will enter a deviant path.

I don't think this happens so much in the modern world, but maybe it does.

We might attach to our practice, to think it has to be done just in a certain way and everyone else is doing it wrong. Of course this isn't good. We need to be able to adapt our practice for

whatever our circumstances are. For example: I like to meditate when things are quiet and I'm alone. But, I still practice when my kids are here. I have to adjust my practice to account for kids being around.

If I was just obsessed with things being quiet, that would be attaching to it and losing the measure.

BEING NATURAL

Let it go and be spontaneous,

Experience no going or staying.

Accord with your nature, unite with the Way,

Wander at ease, without vexation.

This sounds like a Daoist teaching. It's important to be natural and spontaneous. Being natural means being who we really are. Engaging the world with a sense of wakefulness instead of delusion.

If we're being natural we stop trying to control everything all the time. We just let the universe unfold as it is.

Being natural also refers to dwelling in our Buddha nature. It means seeing anything that happens as part of our journey to awakening. It means that there is nothing we are holding onto that we can't put down if we need to.

Bound by thoughts, you depart from the real;

And sinking into a stupor is as bad.

To be bound by our thoughts means to be influenced or carried away by them all the time. We can accumulate more and more delusion and just sink into a stupor. That is what we don't want.

It is not good to weary the spirit.

Why alternate between aversion and affection?

If you wish to enter the one vehicle,

Do not be repelled by the sense realm.

This is about grasping again, picking and choosing. So much of "Faith in Mind" takes us back to that main point that's in the very beginning. It's not hard to reach Enlightenment if we aren't

grasping or rejecting all the time. We are encouraged to practice without being attached. As soon as we become attached, we start to lose our way.

The one vehicle is the Buddha Way. We aren't really following the Buddha so much as we are trying to do what he did. A powerful practice is just dwelling where we are, learning how to be in our situation without feeling aversion when things get hard. That's what "Do not be repelled by the sense realm" means.

This also applies to our meditation practice. The temple I go to sometimes is in an urban area. It's next door to a fire department. So, not only are there the regular sounds of being in the middle of the city, but also once in a while there is the sound of sirens, as the firefighters rush off to save people. These could be terrible distractions, of course. That's part of what the text is talking about here. If we are upset by the noises of these firetrucks or whatever else we hear in the distance, then we are being repelled by the sense realm.

With no aversion to the sense realm,

You become one with true enlightenment.

If we aren't affected by the sense realm, by our environment, then we can dwell in Enlightenment here and now. If we have strong feelings about our surroundings, then we won't be able to practice very well.

The wise have no motives;

Fools put themselves in bondage.

"The wise have no motives" is really another way of saying what I've been saying this whole time. We aren't practicing to attain anything. We are practicing to practice. That is what it means to have no motives.

I will always remember the Eagles song, "Already Gone." In it, the singer, Glenn Frey, says, "So oftentimes it happens that we live our lives in chains, and we never even know we have the key."

I don't think the Eagles were singing about spiritual practice, I think the song is about a relationship. But, to me, the quote really applies.

It's our own minds that keep us in bondage, that cause our delusion. We bind ourselves with delusion. If we can just put down those attachments, then we can manifest our true nature.

There's actually a very famous story about Sengcan about this:

A monk asked the master Sengcan: "Master, show me the way to liberation."

Sengcan replied: "Who binds you?"

The monk replied: “No one binds me.”

Sengcan said: “Then why do you seek liberation?”

This is considered a koan, a story that’s supposed to help us turn our minds a little. If we think about it really deeply, we might have some insights.

The point is, what if we’re free already? What if we’re looking for something that we already have?

ONENESS AND DUALITY

One thing is not different from another.

The deluded mind clings to whatever it desires.

If we awakening we can see how all things are connected, how separation is an illusion. When we attach to or reject anything, we are dwelling in duality with whatever that object is. If all things are one, then seeking Enlightenment outside of ourselves makes no sense. That creates a duality.

The Diamond Sutra says there is no Dharma form and there is nothing that is not the form of the Dharma. This seems paradoxical but the point is that we shouldn’t be attached to existence or emptiness.

Using mind to cultivate mind –

Is this not a great mistake?

When we practice we are using our minds to work on our minds. We are using our delusions to transcend delusion.

The erring mind begets tranquility and confusion;

In enlightenment there are no likes or dislikes.

Before awakening, it’s easy to separate things between ‘enlightenment’ and ‘delusion’, or ‘sacred’ and ‘ordinary’. Once again, these are just labels. There is no sacred that can be separated from the ordinary. In the Platform Sutra the sixth Patriarch tells us that to leave the world is to remain in the world, that the true practitioner doesn’t need to go away to the mountains to practice, but can practice here and now. We can flow with causes and conditions no matter what they are.

Enlightenment is right here, not somewhere else.

The duality of all things

Issues from false discriminations.

Some examples of ways we engage duality: you and I, the Buddha and other beings, wisdom and ignorance.

In the Platform Sutra the sixth Patriarch lists thirty-six pairs of opposites that often lead us deeply into duality.

The Heart Sutra says: “There is no wisdom and no attainment; with nothing to attain, bodhisattvas, relying on prajnaparamita, have no obstructions in their minds.”

So, once again, Sengcan is telling us that we aren’t practicing to attain anything, we are practicing just to practice.

A dream, an illusion, a flower in the sky –

How could they be worth grasping?

Nothing is real and permanent. We tend to want things to stay around forever, but nothing ever does. The concept of Emptiness doesn’t mean there’s nothing so much as it means that there’s nothing to hold onto. Everything is impermanent.

Gain and loss, right and wrong –

Discard them all at once.

Again, don’t attach to labels. Thinking in these terms doesn’t serve us very well a lot of the time.

If the eyes do not close in sleep,

All dreams will cease of themselves.

“The eyes” are our awareness. When we lose our awareness, when we aren’t here in this moment, we are dreaming. Dreaming is being carried away by our wandering thoughts. The idea that our eyes aren’t closing just means that we are very diligent in our practice. We are striving to keep our minds open so we can awaken from the daydream.

If the mind does not discriminate,

All things are of one suchness.

The essence of one suchness is profound;

Unmoving, conditioned things are forgotten.

If we can stop discriminating all the time, then we can see everything. There is no difference between you and I, between inside and outside. It's all unified as a whole. We can leave behind this sense of small self and dwell in our true nature.

Contemplate all things as equal,

And you return to things as they are.

This just refer to non-discrimination. When we stop labeling and judging things all the time, then we can see things as they really are.

When the subject disappears,

There can be no measuring or comparing.

If we can let go of these judgments and preconceptions that we're carrying, then we can experience a state beyond the self. This is enlightenment.

REST AND SUCHNESS

Stop activity and there is no activity;

When activity stops, there is no rest.

Since two cannot be established,

How can there be one?

Stilling our minds is like resting and sometimes when we're practicing we can experience a profound feeling of relief. It's tiring for our minds to be active all the time. Slowing down and stilling our minds can feel very good at times, although at other times meditation feels like a great struggle. But this stillness doesn't really exist in opposition to the mental activity that we call 'monkey mind' because the truth is that in real stillness there's no opposition to anything. There is just a letting go.

In the very ultimate,

Rules and standards do not exist.

Enlightenment is beyond whatever box we are trying to put it in. Even rules and standards are things we can't hold onto.

Develop a mind of equanimity,

And all deeds are put to rest.

A mind of equanimity is a mind without distinctions, a mind that doesn't chase after this or that. When your mind is in equanimity, whatever you do is the same as doing nothing at all. Your mind is resting in equanimity. When the mind isn't making distinctions then there is no self and other, nowhere to go and nothing to do. This doesn't mean we don't do anything, but rather that our minds are in a state of rest.

Anxious doubts are completely cleared.

Right faith is made upright.

When we have a mind of equanimity, we don't have such doubts about ourselves or the path anymore.

Nothing lingers behind,

Nothing can be remembered.

Bright and empty, functioning naturally,

The mind does not exert itself.

We should strive to come to a state where things don't leave a trace in our minds. For example, I shouldn't be upset by something that happened yesterday. I shouldn't cling to things in the past so much. Not that we shouldn't learn from things that happen, of course, just that we shouldn't cling. We try not to bring our emotional baggage into everything that happens.

When the mind is bright and empty, it just sees everything as it is, without coloring it's perception with baggage and preconceived ideas. Then it can be rested and not have to exert itself so much.

It is not a place of thinking,

Difficult for reason and emotion to fathom.

If you have trouble understanding teachings about enlightenment and emptiness, you're in the company of many. The truth is that these concepts are difficult for reason and emotion to understand. That's why we have to practice and strive diligently. It's only through practice that we can have experience and it's only experience that can go forward.

In the Dharma Realm of true suchness,

There is no other, no self.

True suchness is kind of a clunky translation. “Suchness” isn’t really a word that means anything to us. It refers to things as they really are, interdependent and impermanent. True suchness isn’t bound by the separation of self and other. True suchness is beyond such distinctions.

To accord with it is vitally important;

Only refer to “not two.”

In not-two all things are in unity;

nothing is excluded.

To understand suchness we have to see beyond duality. We think of things as separate, but they’re not. In true suchness we feel at one with other beings. We form a unity with each other. And everyone is included. The “not two” refers to duality. The Platform Sutra says that aversion is the same as Enlightenment.

The wise throughout the ten directions

All enter this principle.

This principle is neither hurried nor slow –

One thought for ten thousand years

“Wise” here refers to prajna, transcendental wisdom. All beings who cultivate prajna will enter the principle, which means to enter into the gate to Enlightenment.

There’s been some debate within Buddhism about whether Enlightenment comes suddenly, all at once, or in stages. Here Sengcan is challenging both of those views. It’s neither hurried nor slow because the truth is we’re already there.

“Ten thousand years” here is used to indicate unlimited time. One thought is the mind that dwells in stillness. One moment of real stillness is like unlimited time.

Abiding nowhere yet everywhere,

The ten thousand directions are right before you.

True suchness, Enlightenment, is everywhere. Nothing is separate and nothing is left out. The universe has been described as a vast net of jewels, with each jewel reflecting all the others

endlessly. I like to compare it to a broken beer bottle by the side of the road that reflects the sunlight and also everything around. Everything in the universe reflects everything else.

“You are not a drop in the ocean, you are the entire ocean in a drop,” is a quote by Rumi. Rumi was not a Buddhist, but he really expressed this idea well, didn't he?

The smallest is the same as the largest

In the realm where delusion is cut off.

The largest is the same as the smallest;

No boundaries are visible.

What you see in front of you is the equivalent of everything. All things connect to all other things. To say that the smallest is the same as the largest is to erase all boundaries.

Existence is precisely emptiness;

Emptiness is precisely existence.

This takes the idea even further, there is no difference between things that exist and things that do not. Even “real” is a label we are putting on things.

If it is not like this,

Then you must not preserve it.

You have to let go of the baggage and attachments that you are carrying. They are really holding you back.

One is everything,

Everything is one.

True suchness is one with everything. Nothing is separate, and it never was.

If you can be like this,

Why worry about not finishing?

When we know that our true nature is Enlightenment, then we don't worry about goals and attainments. We get there by realizing we're already there.

Faith and mind are not two;

Non-duality is faith in mind.

This is the same as saying Enlightenment is one with all things. There is no separation between your ordinary mind and the true wakefulness that is your nature.

The path of words is cut off;

There is no past, no future, no present.

The truth is beyond words, really. We try to describe it, as Sengcan tried, and as I'm trying now. But it's only through practice and intuition that we can really get any kind of understanding.

Past, present, and future refers to our efforts to measure progress.

Once a student asked master Hsu Yun, "Is there time in Enlightenment?" And Hsu Yun said, "If there is time in Enlightenment, it is not Enlightenment." In awakening the self drops away, so there is no one there to measure time. It's hard for us to think that time doesn't exist when we don't measure it, but the truth is that past, present, and future are really only concepts that exist in the minds of those that perceive them.

And with that deep and profound statement about time, the text of Faith in Mind comes to an end. I hope you have enjoyed exploring it with me.