

Faith To Carry Us To The Millennium

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So here we are once again at the Feast of Tabernacles. We are here celebrating an event yet to come, for a period of time that is still in the future. Most people understand celebrating events that have already occurred, like Independence Day for example. It is an event that has already happened, and that is easy for all of us to understand, but to celebrate an event that is supposed to happen sometime in the future is kind of crazy, is it not? Yet we are here, brethren.

For us to celebrate an event that takes place in the future, it takes certain amount of faith. So all of us that are here have to have a certain amount of faith or we would not be here. We have to have the faith that this event we are celebrating will really take place in the future.

The big question is, do you and I have enough faith to get us from point "A"- right here, right now, to point "B" which we all know is the Millennium or the one thousand year reign with Christ, our King and our Savior. Do we have what it is going to take? Do we have that kind of faith?

All of us are in this thing together, brethren, whether we know it or not. God is working with all of us. All you young people are sanctified through your parents, and all of us have a tremendous amount of knowledge about God and His plan, which you will all be held accountable for.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

So without faith there is no pleasing God, right? So again I ask, "Do we have enough faith to carry us through what is coming upon Israel and all of mankind?" as Charles had mentioned in his sermon. Do we have enough faith to carry us into the Millennium no matter what takes place in any of our lives? Do we have enough faith to please God? Without faith we will never see the Millennium.

So what is this faith we are going to need?

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Faith is trust, confidence, and assurance. God is saying that trust, confidence and assurance are all invisible things; we cannot see them, but God is also saying here that there is evidence of things that are visible that we should know and understand in creation.

God is invisible. We cannot see Him, but we come here and worship Him. The very thing that we are celebrating—the Millennium—is invisible. Our King and our Savior is invisible. The new Jerusalem is invisible. The Kingdom of God is invisible, but we still have evidence that there is a God in creation.

That is what faith is, it is a trust in things that we cannot see. It is confidence and assurance in things that are not seen.

Matthew 9:27-30 When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, “Son of David, have mercy on us!” And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.” Then He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be to you.” And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, “See that no one knows it.”

God gave the blind men the faith that they needed to be healed and glorify God. Again do we have the kind of faith that we are going to need to endure to the end?

Daniel 3:15-18 Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?” Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

We all know the rest of the story. God did deliver them. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego had tremendous faith in God. They had trust, confidence, and assurance in God that either way it was going to be okay. You and I are going to have this type of tremendous faith, just like the blind guys had, just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego had, no matter what even if it comes to giving up our very lives.

So where are we going to get this kind of faith? Let us turn to Revelation 1:17-18, and I am going to read this out of the New Living Bible.

Revelation 1:17-18 (NLT) When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last. I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave."

Brethren, how many of us are already afraid and concerned? People in God's church are fearful; they do not want to hear the commentary that Mr. Ritenbaugh gives because it scares them. They do not want to listen to the news, even though God wants us to be watchful of what is going on. People are frightened to live in America and in this church. Do we have the faith to believe what Christ says here? Let us turn to I Peter 1:7-8, and I am going to read this out of the Amplified Version

I Peter 1:7-8 (Amplified) So that the genuineness of your faith may be tested [brethren, we know that we are going to get tests along the way], your faith, which is infinitely more precious than the perishable gold which is tested and purified by fire. This proving of your faith is intended to rebound to you praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ—The Messiah, The Anointed One is revealed. Without having seen Him, you love Him; though you do not even now see Him, you believe in Him and exult and thrill with inexpressible and glorious, triumphant, heavenly joy.

Again He is invisible, brethren. Even though we cannot see Him, we still believe in Him do we not? Now do we have enough faith to believe what is said in these two verses, even when going through severe trials? Do we have enough faith to get from point "A"—right now to point "B"—the very first day of the Millennium? Christ tells us what is coming and what to watch out for just prior to the end of the age, but are we taking it seriously, brethren?

Matthew 24:3-4 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" [The disciples were just like us; they wanted to know what was coming and when.] And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed [He gave them a warning] that no one deceives you.

Now, brethren, how many of us in the greater church of God have already been deceived? When the World Wide church of God broke up, tons of people were deceived; they are not here anymore. Continuing on in verse 5 He says:

Matthew 24:5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

He repeats it again. The deception is already well underway. The first part of Christ's warning about false ministers and many people being deceived is already underway in the greater churches of God, brethren. It is upon us; it is happening already.

Matthew 24:6- 8 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. [He is telling us not to worry because He has it all under control] For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. [You and I are going to go through these things as well, brethren] All these are the beginning of sorrows.

The deception, war, starvation, diseases, and all these things are just the beginning of bad times, brethren. Do we have the faith to carry us through what comes next after all of this stuff?

Matthew 24:9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

This is coming for all of us, and it gets personal here. Some of us are going to be killed; do we have enough faith to get from point "A" to point "B?" That is the question.

Matthew 24:10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

That is already happening in the church. Martin went over that to an extent. You and I should not get offended about anything except if someone stands up before you and waters down the doctrines of God and His way of life. That is already happening within the churches, brethren; and people do not seem to be offended at that, but we get offended with each other.

Here we are at the feast having a good time, but He says that there is going to be a time coming when we are going to betray one another and hate one another. This is talking about God's people within the greater churches of God. Some of these things are already happening right now.

Matthew 24:11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

We really have to guard our minds brethren against this deception. You and I better know our Bibles and we had better be living by every word of God because it says, "Many of us will be deceived." Many have already been deceived.

Matthew 24:12-13 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

This is going to take tons of endurance. Christ is telling us here in verse 13 that we are going to need to have tremendous faith to endure what is coming. So the question here is, "How do we get the faith we are going to need to endure this present age, all the trials we are faced with right now and going to face in the future?" Let us turn to James 2:20 and I am going to read it from the Amplified

James 2:20 (Amplified) Are you willing to be shown proof, you foolish unproductive, spiritually deficient fellow, that faith apart from good works is inactive, ineffective, and worthless?

All kinds of people have faith in things, brethren, but that is not the faith that we need. Now remember what it said in Hebrews 11:6

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

So we cannot please Him without faith, but without works we will not have the faith we are going to need. So how does this all work, brethren? If we do not have the faith, we cannot please God, right? Then in James 2:20, He says again, “Faith without works is a dead faith.” So what kind of works do we need in order to have enough faith to sustain us all the way through to the Millennium and to prepare all of us for what lies ahead of us in this present life?

Do you know what our works are, brethren? It is really easy; our works are what we do, say, and how we conduct our lives every minute of every day. That is why everything matters. That is what John Ritenbaugh has been talking about for six or eight months. That is why everything we do matters, because our actions and our works are what allow the Holy Spirit in us—this great gift God gave us at baptism, to either thrive and grow, brethren, or to be quenched.

How do we thank God for this tremendous gift that He gave us? By prayer. Let us turn to I Thessalonians 5:17-19. I am going to put this all together before we are all done here.

I Thessalonians 5:17-19 Pray without ceasing, [God is telling us that you and I should be in a prayerful attitude every minute of every day. He is not talking about being on your knees every minute, but rather it is the attitude.] in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. [we should be thankful for everything, brethren; we should not be offended by anything. Then in verse 19 He warns us:] Do not quench the Spirit. [He says do not let that happen because you will be deceived.]

Do you know what our most important works are, brethren? There are four of them that are extremely necessary; and in fact they are crucial to having the faith we will need to get us from point “A” to point “B.” They are:

1. Prayer—everyday
2. Bible study—everyday

3. Meditation—we should be thinking about God and His laws everyday
4. Fasting—we have to do it more than just once a year; once a year just does not cut it.

Now all four of these are works. It takes works to pray, does it not? It takes work to study; it takes work through concentration to meditate; and it takes work to abstain from food and water. None of this is easy, brethren; it all takes work. These four things are not our only works, though; everything we do is a work, and it all matters. Again that is what John Ritenbaugh has been telling us.

John 13:34 (Living) “And so I am giving a new commandment to you now—love each other just as much as I love you.

That is a tough one, brethren. This is a tall order that takes a ton of work. Bill Onisick has been talking about this; we all have different personalities and some personalities are easy to get along with and others can be very difficult to get along with. It is hard to love them, but love in any form takes work.

John 13:35 Your strong love for each other will prove to the world that you are my disciples.

Our works will leave proof to the world, if we love each other, that we belong to God. So we can all see how important our works are; but, brethren, they have to be good all the time, every minute of every day; that is why everything in life matters.

Let us get a couple of examples of our works. I am gonna tell you a couple of stories, here. My son, J.B., when he was 19 years old and just graduated from automotive school, there was a woman in the church whose brother owned an automotive shop. She got J.B. a job there. After about six months of working there, the Feast of Tabernacles rolled around. Now J.B. told his boss way in advance of the days he needed off for the Feast, but when it was time to leave for the Feast, his boss told him that he was low man on the totem pole, and that if he went to the Feast he was going to be fired.

Well J.B. told me what his boss said, and I told him that he had a decision to make—either you can have a job, money and prosperity—the way of the world, or you

can have no job and maybe poverty for a while—God's way; it is your choice. He said he had already made up his mind, and he was going to go to the Feast. He was fired. Poverty came; he could not find a job for about 6 months, and his boss would not let him get unemployment because his boss said that he had quit.

He looked for a job every day for six months. He was broke; then one day he found a job at the very place that he had always wanted to work. The big bonus was that his starting pay was twice as much as he was getting in his previous job; that was a pretty good blessing. It was happy days and an end to misery, poverty, and heartache for J.B.

Three years later J.B.'s old boss—the one that fired him—came into the place J.B. now worked and spoke to J.B.'s new boss. He told him he owned an automotive shop, and his technicians were having an issue with the Chrysler transmission. He asked if he could speak with their transmissions expert, there, which turned out to be J.B. He was the only one who did all the transmission work.

He was very surprised to see him and asked him how long he had been working there, and J.B. told him “since you fired me.” They talked for a while, and J.B. told him what the problem was with the transmissions and told him if his Technicians had any more issues just call him, and he would walk them through the problem. That night, J.B. told me the story and he said he really felt good to have his old boss to have to come to him for help. And I told him that he was a good example; and he did the right thing and glorified God.

Now let me tell you another story, here. I was twenty-five years old and had been baptized for about 2 years. I was working for a plumbing and heating company in the sheet metal department, and I wrote on my boss' calendar that year all the days I needed to take off for the feast and all the holy days. My boss told me that it was not problem, until it was time to go to the Feast.

Now everyone in the company had a new company truck. Every night we took the trucks home, and then had to call the boss and report our progress and order materials. Well two weeks before the Feast, I told my boss to look at the calendar because I was going to be taking a couple of weeks off. My boss told me that if I went to the Feast I would be fired; and every night for two weeks, when I called in, he cussed at me and reminded me that if I went to the Feast I would be fired.

Well, when it finally came time to go to the Feast, I asked my boss, “Am I fired or not?” He said, “No, but I am taking your truck from you.” When I came back from the Feast, I called my boss and asked him if I still had a job; and he said they were swamped and

they had a truck loaded with material ready to go for my job.

When I got there they gave me the keys to an old, beat up 1958 Ford which had around 300,000 miles on it. It was worn out; I could not go over 45mph with it. When I finally got to the job site, which was about 40 miles away, I found that the job site was a total mess. The general contractor was upset because we were way behind. Three houses were already lapped over; there was no metal on the roof for the roofers and the roofers literally wanted to fight because they worked by the piece and we were holding them up and costing them money.

So now I figured the tables had turned; I was in the driver's seat. So, I called my boss and told him what was going on, and I told him to either get me a good truck out here with a new toolbox and tools I need, or you can take this job and stick it. Well, he said "Don't do that, I'll get you whatever you need, I'll send it out right away." So when I got off the phone I felt like I had gotten even, and it felt really good. I got even, and I got my way, what could be better than that?

Now the reason I told you these two stories is because everything in our lives matters, brethren. J.B. and I both started out pretty good didn't we? We stood our ground no matter what. We were willing to lose our jobs and both went to the feast for the entire eight days, but only one of us finished good; only one of us glorified God; only one of us allowed God to strengthen the Holy Spirit, which He gave to all of us at baptism. My decision was actually quenching the Holy Spirit that God had given me.

Now remember this—both of our bosses knew that we were religious; they knew that we were going to the Feast of Tabernacles because we told them. J.B.'s boss was the brother of an elder's wife in the church; he knew a great deal about our religion.

You see, J.B. treated his boss with respect and offered him any help he could give him and glorified God. I, however, did not. I made demands on my boss. I glorified me rather than God, brethren.

Now what do you think the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego is all about, brethren? It is all about glorifying God. That is why God gave those three men the faith that it took to say, "Our God can save us from the fiery furnace if He wants; no matter what, we will not bow down to your gods or worship you." Then what happened? Who did the great king Nebuchadnezzar give the glory to?

Daniel 3:24-28 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men

bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here." [Now think what a witness this was to all kinds of great people at that time and think of how this glorified God. What a witness this was!] Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them. [Then what happened? The great king gave glory, not to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, but to God here in verse 28] Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!

Do you know that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego are not even mentioned again in the Bible after Daniel 3? That is because it is all about giving God the glory. We give glory to God by our works, brethren; that is why works are so important.

Now do you think that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego just woke up one day and said, "If we are required to bow down to this great image of gold, we are not going to do it. No matter what, we are going to refuse." Do you really think that is what happened?

We are talking about their very lives here, brethren, and a horrible death by fire. They did not just wake up one day and say we are going to refuse; that is not what happened. These guys were showing their faith, which God gave them by their works. Their works probably started when they were very young living in their own country of Judah. As they went on and as they glorified God, He gave them a little more of the Holy Spirit and gave them a little more faith. And as they passed one trial after the other, they grew in the faith they were going to need.

Now I do not know if that is what happened, but I do know that they showed their works to Daniel from day one did they not? From day one of their captivity, when they kept God's clean and unclean food laws, they were showing their works, brethren. This event also gave God the glory; it was witness to the soldiers and the men that the king had put

over them.

Now you might think that I am saying that our works will save us, but I am not. I am not saying that at all. We are saved by the grace of God, brethren. It is a gift that God has given us because He loves us. The faith that we are going to need comes from God through the holy spirit. That is why we need to keep the holy spirit within us in good shape. How do we do that?

By our works, by prayer, by Bible study, by meditation, by fasting more than just once a year. And there is more to it than that still; it is by keeping the Sabbath, by loving the brethren, by our conduct, by our speech, by our attitudes, by our hospitality, by keeping the Ten Commandments properly, by God's laws. It is by everything we do every day of our lives.

You see we can keep the Holy Spirit in good shape and growing within us, or we can quench the Holy Spirit and let it stagnate within us...all by our works. If we keep the Holy Spirit in good shape, God gives us more and stirs up what we already have, and He will give us the faith that we are going to need.

Now I have some statistics here because a lot of other men have mentioned the times that we are living in. I want you to think about this; these are natural disasters by region from 1945 to 1986, a span of 41 years.

In east Asia—the pacific region—there were 401 disasters in those 41 years. 900,077 deaths and the deaths per million of population in that area were 5. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there were 339 disasters. 239,000 deaths, 21 people died per million of population. In Southern Asia, there were 234 disasters. 808,000 deaths, 10 deaths per million of population. In North America (Israel), there were 149 disasters. 15,000 deaths, and only 2 deaths per million of population.

Now you might think that North America is not as populated and that is correct, but now we are going to go to Europe and the U.S.S.R. Europe is densely populated. In Europe there were 127 disasters, 166,000 deaths, and only 2 deaths per million of population. Then in the Middle East and North Africa, there were 86 disasters. 128,000 deaths, and 24 deaths per million of population.

Now these figures exclude the 1970 cyclone in Bangladesh that killed 500,000 people, the 1970 China earthquake which killed 700,000 people, and the 1948 Soviet Union earthquake which killed 110,000 people.

Now think about this: there have been 20 disasters which I was going to go through that have happened in America since 9/11, plus all the bombings and shootings. These disasters have caused 163 deaths per event, and I know I have even missed some, brethren.

In the 41 year period between 1945 and 1986, there were 100 deaths per disaster in North America and Isrealitish areas; so the death per disaster here is increasing because there were 163 recently in a much shorter span then there was in the 41 year that I went over.

Just this past week we had the flooding in Colorado; we also had a number of forest fires in the west, and we had the shootings at the Navy Yard in Washington D.C. which left 13 more people dead. And did you know that since President Obama took office, there has been 19 mass murder events in 5 years.

I think that we can all see that a lot of the deaths that are out of our control are happening quite frequently now, and they seem to be increasing. Charles sort of went over that today. There are things are on top of or in addition to all the other trials we are dealing with every day, and these things are starting to affect us, brethren, even in the church. I know of three families in the greater church of God, in the past few years, that have lost their homes due to tornado's. Things that did not used to happen to any of us in the church, but as the world becomes more sinful, these things are going to affect us with in the church.

Are you going to be able to endure all the trials that are coming, brethren? Do you think that if God spoke to you like He did to Abraham and said, "Go up to such a place and kill your child," could you do it? Do you think Abraham woke up one morning and just all of a sudden he had the faith it took to do what God said? The answer is no he did not. Remember what James 2:18 says:

James 2:18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Abraham's works started in Genesis 12:1 when God told him to get out his country and go to a country God would show him. Abraham had a track record of works and obedience to God and His laws, and that is how faith is built, brethren. We need to have the same record of good works and obedience.

There are four ingredients in this recipe I mentioned here:

1. The Holy Spirit—Who supplies that to us? God gave us that—that is how much He loves us. We do not have to work for that; we have it.
2. Grace—again, Who supplied that? Christ did on the cross by the shedding of His blood.
3. Faith itself—the tremendous faith that we are all going to need—where does that come from? It only comes from God; you cannot muster it up. You get it from doing what is right, from doing good works. He gives us more and more as we pass the tests and trials that He puts us through.
4. Good works—that is all we have to do; that is all God is asking for. God is not asking to do anything that we do not understand or that we cannot do.

We all work every day; it is not foreign to us, brethren. If we are going to have the faith that we need to endure whatever comes upon us, then we need to have the works that please God and keep the Holy Spirit within us growing and in good shape starting with prayer, Bible study, and meditation and fasting and ending with what it says in Colossians 3:12-15:

Colossians 3:12-15 Therefore, as the elect of God [he is talking to all of His people, here], holy and beloved, [because He loves us] put on tender mercies [how kind are you?], kindness, humility, meekness, long suffering; bearing with one another, [not being offended with one another] and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do [let things go, do not hold grudges; just let it go]. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

So, brethren, remember it is going to be work either way you go. You can have good works or bad works, but it is still going to have works; only one of them is going to get you to the place we are celebrating here.