

December 2018

Greetings Brethren:

Winter is upon us, and we continue to move farther away from the Feast of Tabernacles. What a blessing it was to convoke in God's presence, to be filled with more knowledge of His Way, and to experience real peace, love and joy. Now that we have returned to our normal lives, we find ourselves in an entirely different environment. The days in which we live are chaotic, uncertain and for many, a source of fear. As the called of God, we need not be fearful nor worry about the increasing chaos surrounding us.

### Faith

Each day we are faced with the task of living our lives in this present evil world, but not in a way that requires us to be a part of this world or shaken by the events taking place. Our confidence is not in the things of this world, but in something else. Something eternal.

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

God is beautifully working out His plan of salvation. Our elder Brother and High Priest, Jesus Christ, told us the way that leads to salvation. By divine revelation He made this—and the requirement to hold fast—known.

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

And so I say to you, as the Apostle Paul said to those at Galatia: I certify you, brethren, that the GOSPEL which is preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but BY THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST (Herbert W. Armstrong, *Co-worker Letter*; November 29, 1954).

We believe that which was given to Moses, to the prophets, to Jesus Christ, to the twelve apostles, to the Apostle Paul and to an end-time servant is the same message. It is Truth. And what did Jesus Christ proclaim? The good news of the coming Kingdom of God. It is something that will occur in the future. It is something that we cannot presently see. Yet, it is something that we know is true. How? By faith.

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

What are a few of the other things we know by faith?: God's Master Plan of salvation as depicted through the Holy Days; truth comes by divine revelation through chosen servants; the purpose of man is to qualify to become members of the God Family; the true requirements for man's qualification into His Kingdom; and the imminent return of Jesus Christ. We believe these to be true. We live our lives in a certain way because they are true. We live by faith.

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Romans 1:17).

### **Who Did Not Live by Faith?**

We have an example of failure in ancient Israel. In fact, a large portion of the Bible is the recorded failure of Israel. Importantly, we need to remember that these examples were recorded for us so that we may understand the failures and avoid making the same mistakes. Why? Because naturally we are prone to identical failures.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Israel was given a promise. God, through Moses, told Israel that they would be set free and inherit a promised land. By mighty miracles Israel saw the destruction of the strongest nation on earth at that time. The nation that enslaved them, and made their lives bitter, was brought low. Once free, Israel witnessed time and time again miracles that demonstrated God would fulfill His promises.

They were preserved from thirst. They were preserved from hunger. They were protected and safe, even when they physically did not feel safe. Unfortunately, they constantly questioned and doubted God's promises. They thought they would die from

lack of water, lack of food, and anything else that became a temporary obstacle. They simply did not have faith that God would fulfill His promises.

For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it (Hebrews 4:2).

Without faith Israel was not capable of remaining obedient to God and His commands. They were given a way of life that, if followed, would have produced tremendous physical blessings. However, Israel, as a whole, did not have the desire to obey God. They could not retain the vision as a priority above all else. Their carnal minds dominated them, and they continually rebelled against God. As an example to us, therefore, we must constantly assess ourselves to determine if our carnal minds are dominating us, or if we truly are living and thinking with spiritual minds. How often do we get angry and emotionally react? How much fear do we have because of a current difficulty? Do we doubt God will help us? How much love are we truly exhibiting to our brothers and sisters in the faith? How often do we get offended when something is said to us, or about us? Do we let these things grow in our minds as negative thoughts or emotions? How often do we get frustrated because we do not have something we want? Are we really putting forth the maximum effort within our abilities and circumstances regarding prayer, Bible study and fasting? Likewise, are we working on mastering these minds and controlling our negative thoughts? We need to allow the mind of Jesus Christ to dwell in us and then put forth daily effort to live by that mind through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5).

### **Do We Have an Example of Living by Faith?**

When thinking of an example of faith, Abraham often comes to mind. We have read many times the example he set by living in faith. Why? Because God made promises to Abraham, and he believed. Abraham believed in God and trusted that God would fulfill His promises.

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath

foundations, whose builder and maker is God. . . . By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure (Hebrews 11:8–10, 17–19).

God promised Abraham that his descendants would not only be innumerable like the stars of heaven, but that they would come through the lineage of Isaac. But if Abraham was to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, how could that be? How could this occur if Isaac was dead? Abraham did not have the answer to how it would work out. But he did have something else. He had faith. And by faith he knew that if this was part of God's plan, then He was able to raise Isaac from the dead. Abraham believed God would fulfill His promises, even if he, Abraham, did not fully understand how.

There are many other examples of faithful servants demonstrating their faith in a variety of ways.

And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect (Hebrews 11:36–40).

The individuals referenced here endured hard trials, verbal insults, imprisonment and even death. How and why were they able to endure those hardships? Because they believed in something greater than their distress. They believed the fulfillment of a given promise was worth more than anything else. They lived with faith.

### **Do You Have the Required Faith?**

If you have been called, were baptized, and have received a down payment of the Holy Spirit, then you have an ingredient that ancient Israel did not have, and which led to their failure. You can have faith because it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. God performed a miracle with you and provided a means whereby you can understand His spiritual Truth. You can truly understand His plan of salvation. You can believe your purpose in life is to

qualify to be born into His eternal Family. You can believe the requirement to keep His Commandments. You can know that the Law was not done away, but magnified.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil (Matthew 5:17).

Do you believe these spiritual truths? Are you in agreement with God's plan of salvation? Do you have faith that these things are true and that God will fulfill His promises? Do you have any doubt? If you resolutely have faith in these things, then you are very blessed and have a required element. But if that is all you have, is it enough? Will you be able to avoid the errors of ancient Israel? Will you be able to overcome the self? Will you develop the necessary character to be found worthy of inheriting His Kingdom?

You may say yes, and that every day you live believing and knowing these things to be true.

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Romans 1:17).

### **Are You Living by Faith?**

You have faith that God will fulfill His promises. But, are you living by faith? The answer may not be as obvious as you think. Day after day, month after month, year after year, do you hold fast to the good news of the coming Kingdom of God? Do you believe Truth was revealed to an end-time servant and that you are holding fast to those foundational principles?

This is necessary. But, the Apostle James clarified what else is needed.

Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? (James 2:18–20)

Just having faith in these spiritual truths is dead without works. If your works, then, do not support these spiritual truths, how will you be found worthy of eternal life? We demonstrate our faith through our works, which are shown by how we live our lives.

We do this because genuine faith is shown by consistent adherence to the revealed way of life. Stated another way, faith is not just believing God will fulfill His promises, faith is a Way of Life. We demonstrate faith by how we live our lives on a daily basis. It takes a tremendous amount of effort on our parts to subdue the self and, in faith, to perform those requirements imposed upon us. What, then, is required of us now? What are some of the ways in which we demonstrate living faith?

1) Holding fast to the Truth. Those things that were revealed as God's spiritual truths to an end-time servant are eternal. Keep them, and do not change, alter or modify them to fit your desires or circumstances. As simple as that sounds, many of our beloved brothers and sisters in the Faith have found that too difficult to do and have embraced another way of life. While it is true that many have wholly abandoned the Truth, others have abandoned it by perverting it. As an example, they may still tithe, adhere to the health laws and forsake worldly holidays. But, have they not forsaken the sign of God's people of the Sabbath? How does God view their absence in attending any of the annual Sabbaths at designated places, instead attending where they choose, or at a location that is selected by someone who is not authorized by God?

Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them (Isaiah 1:13–14).

God hates it! These verses are an admonishment to us far beyond the requirement to be present at a place where God places His name, as confirmed by one of His authorized servants. It also admonishes some who are at one of those correctly designated places, but are perverting it mentally by forgetting God and not living according to His revealed spiritual principles.

Whether it be the Sabbath, or any of the other truths we learned, hold fast and do not water down physically or mentally.

2) Be consistent. In our conversion process we are to develop character. That principally means we are to stop doing what comes naturally to us and begin doing what is demonstrated by the example of Jesus Christ. We are to stop hating others, stop being jealous of others, stop manipulating people, and stop thinking that we can solve all our problems. We should begin to love one another, be happy for the success or accomplishment of others, be patient and longsuffering, and come to implicitly trust God.

That behavior is to be demonstrated in good times as well as during tests and trials. If everything went well in our lives, we would never learn to implicitly trust and patiently wait for God. Our demeanor, as reflected by the fruits of the Holy Spirit (love, joy and peace) should be consistent. It should be consistent amongst brethren in good times, and during difficult times. It also should be consistent amongst everyone else we encounter. We should manifest the same demeanor daily, regardless of where we are or who we are with. Jesus Christ said He was the same yesterday, today, and forever. If we are to have His character, we are to be just as consistent in our belief and our daily behavior. That is a manifestation of living faith.

3) Once we have determined that we will hold fast to the Truth and learn to be consistent in our behavior and thoughts, we must hold to another necessary ingredient of faith which is to not become weary in well-doing. When something is new and exciting, people generally tend to put forth tremendous energy and focus, only to find themselves less dedicated and interested over time. How many people are excited to start a new diet to lose weight, only to find themselves reverting to old eating habits after several weeks? How many people buy a gym membership in January to get back into shape, but by spring have stopped going to the gym? The excitement has waned, and what is left is the reality of hard work.

Convert that to our spiritual lives. Do we have any warning against the dangers of reverting to prior behavior?

Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: . . . And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away (Mark 4:3, 5–6).

These are ones who heard the Truth and received it with gladness and enthusiasm. They began to change their lives and live according to the revealed principles that were taught. But when difficulties arose, when tests and trials were encountered, when life was not what was expected, they were offended and turned away. It was exciting and rewarding at first, only to become a burden to cast off later.

How many months, years or decades have passed since your baptism? Do you have the same (or greater) drive and desire to learn and to grow in God's Way? Do you have at least as much zeal to continue overcoming the self? Or, has your enthusiasm and dedication decreased? Do you spend less time with study and prayer because of other distractions in life? Do you find yourself going through the motions of Sabbath

observance out of physical habit, and lacking spiritual growth? Are you still conducting personal evaluation throughout the year, or just right before Passover? Do you tell yourself you are growing spiritually, but you are increasing the amount of worldly entertainment you consume and the worldly activities you participate in?

Brethren, let us not become weary in well-doing by watering down our physical observance as well as reducing our efforts to gain the mastery of our carnal minds. Let us continue to exhibit living faith by adhering to all the principles that we were taught.

4) We need to continue overcoming our personal defects. This includes defects of character as well as defects in attitude. The amount of effort we put into personal mastery is directly related to our love of the Truth and belief that God will keep His promises. How much do you love the Truth? Honestly evaluate your effort in personal mastery and that will be your answer. This will reflect your faith.

As busy as we are with the obligations of life, be sure to continue to take time to analyze yourself—not just what you do, but who you are. You know what your actions are by observing the Sabbath, obeying food laws, removing leavening from your property for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and fasting on Atonement. But who are you in mind? One of the parts of true repentance is to understand what we are by nature, and what we, with carnal minds, really want. We want the things of the world (witchcraft). We exhibit hate and not godly love (murder). We think our way is right because it came from our minds (idolatry).

Are you exhibiting any of these traits still? Do you view the current systems of politics, education, economics and entertainment favorably? None will exist in the same form in the Kingdom. Do you give of yourself to serve others, and not just when it is convenient for you? Do you criticize others because their life choices in non-doctrinal matters are different than yours? Do you get offended easily? Do you doubt God is actively working in your life? Let us continue to overcome our personal defects, show that we truly love God's Truth, and live by faith.

5) Watch and be aware! Those that hold fast to the Truth are the primary targets of Satan. His goal is the destruction of the called, and he is working diligently to make that happen. If those attacks were direct and obvious, then we would be able to see them quickly and avoid them. But that is not how Satan works. He is deceptive and will go after our weaknesses in ways that appeal to our desires and wants. His deception will include planting thoughts of rationalization into our minds, which allows us to do or say the things that we want.

What about those that have left our fellowship? How many of them have said they simply do not believe what we were taught was really God's Truth? Very few. More often, an excuse, or rationalization, is given. "Yes, these are God's truths, but the ministry has made faulty administrative decisions, so this must not be the correct place." Translation: "I don't like what I was told, so I am going elsewhere so that I can do what I want." Is this not what Cain did? "I only need to evaluate myself as commanded right before Passover." Translation: "I know I should perform self-evaluation, which is why I will do so when commanded, but I don't want to constantly put earnest effort into changing my defects of character." If someone believes enough of the foundational truths, that person may obey to some degree. But, the hard work of overcoming the self will not be a priority. If someone rationalizes that constant self-evaluation is not necessary, then how will any meaningful progress be made in character development? If no meaningful character development is made, how will one be found worthy of God's Kingdom?

He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son (Revelation 21:7).

### **Jesus Christ Had Living Faith**

We have been given the perfect example in Jesus Christ and must strive to emulate Him. His obedience to God's laws and the miracles He performed were not done by His own power. Everything He did was by faith in God, the Father's power.

I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me (John 5:30).

Then how was Jesus Christ able to obey God perfectly and perform mighty miracles? What was the source of Christ's faith?

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works (John 14:10).

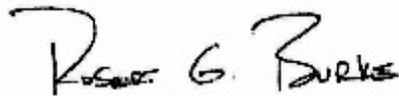
The Father who lived in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit did the mighty works and made Christ's obedience possible. Jesus Christ had absolute faith in God and manifested living faith.

By constantly watching, or evaluating ourselves, we can demonstrate faith in the requirement to change. We will have faith in God's plan of salvation and His work in our lives. We will be able to demonstrate living faith by the things that we do, say and think. All of these things will be reflective of a spiritual mind and will replicate the living faith that Jesus Christ manifested. By faith, we too, will be willing to submit to and obey God.

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him  
(Colossians 2:6).

Brethren, we are commanded to pray without ceasing (1 Corinthians 5:17). Let us draw close to God, stay close to Him, and demonstrate living faith.

Your servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert G. Burke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'R'.

Robert G. Burke