

Fundamentals of Belief  
#17E: The Significance of Faith

Edited Sermon Transcript  
Jon W. Brisby; 7-20-2002

This afternoon, I hope to complete this topic we've been covering for the last four sermons on the Fundamentals of Belief of the Church of God, The Eternal, number seventeen. I have summarized this fundamental under the terms "Redemption, Reward and Faith." It is quite an extensive fundamental statement, and it covers many concepts and principles, which is why it has already taken four sermons. I hope this fifth sermon this afternoon will complete fundamental number seventeen.

Let's begin by reading the fundamental, and then we'll pick up where we left off and see if we can complete it today:

We believe God's purpose is the creation of high spiritual character, and therefore the very object of redemption is to rescue mankind from SIN (transgressing the fundamental spiritual law), and its resulting degradation, misery and unhappiness; and that the object of the present dispensation is to fit those whom God now calls, with their consent, thru a life of trial and test and overcoming sin, growing in grace and knowledge to possess the KINGDOM and to become kings and priests reigning with Christ after His return. . . .

I'll stop right there because that is the portion we have covered up until now. We have gone through and seen and analyzed this issue of "high spiritual character," as Mr. Armstrong called it. As he summarized it, the very purpose of the spiritual endeavor of Christians is the development of character; and even though the word "character" is not mentioned anywhere in the Bible, it is fully and totally summarized in that which God calls "righteousness." And so, righteousness is the ability to know

the difference between right and wrong and to choose the right. It means being able to act upon that which we know is true and right. That's precisely what Mr. Armstrong called "character," which is absolutely covered in the Bible as the principle called "righteousness." And so, we went through that.

We saw that God placed us in the state that we are, with these natural, carnal minds that are rebellious against Him from the very inception of our lives. Our responsibility, as those called, is to come out and to overcome. God has provided a training ground—a crucible for trial and tribulation and difficulties through which we must pass in this process of purification and overcoming. It is through this that He has offered us the great reward we talked about last time—the actual birth into the Family of God, the Kingdom of God, as kings and priests for all eternity in that family government. And so, we talked about the significance of the reward, the "carrot" if you want to call it, that God placed in front of us to hopefully motivate us to be willing to sacrifice all that we have in the flesh—to value, much more so, that which He has offered us in hope for the future. So, we talked about those offices of responsibility—the reward that is at the end of that long journey of redemption.

Now we want to cover the final aspect, which is equally important. Let me now read that portion that Mr. Armstrong wrote, the second half of this principle:

We believe Christians must therefore live a clean, pure, holy life by faith according to the Bible standard, with constant Bible study and surrendered prayer [which we also covered last week], trusting God in and for all things, that yielding to pride and lust of the flesh is sin, that God hears and literally answers the believing prayers of His children who keep His commandments—according as He has promised in His Word, including physical healing, deliverance from temptation and trouble, providing the way for every actual need.

The summary of that which we have to complete on this topic is the issue of faith. It's not just knowing and understanding the Truth. It's not just recognizing, brethren, that we have been called by a glorious God who owns heaven and earth, that we have been given an opportunity for a reward that is far above anything that could ever be offered to a human being; but it's knowing that the way to achieve and to have that reward, to receive salvation, absolutely requires faith.

Luke 18 and verse 16:

But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

Here's that Kingdom that we've been talking about, that which God offered as the hope at the end of this road.

. . . forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

Now, some of you may be asking, "Well, what does this have to do with faith? I thought we were going to talk about faith this afternoon." Why would I quote the words of Jesus Christ concerning entering into the Kingdom of God as a little child? Do you recognize that the very attribute of little children that Christ is referring to has to do with faith? Little children trust naturally. They trust their parents. You see, they haven't been educated enough; they haven't had the hard experiences; they haven't had the opportunity to develop the insidious concepts of mind to become suspicious, to be hardened and to develop the kind of orientation that we consider mature. No, the little child is vulnerable. The reason that they have to be taken care of and protected by their parents is because they do trust, and it makes them an easy target and a prey for those who would take advantage. And yet, Jesus Christ said that those who are going to enter into the Kingdom are going to possess that very trait, the orientation of a little child—being willing to trust implicitly, which is something that adults learn very quickly not to do. It is about faith—the ability to trust God as a Parent and a Father, and to believe Him implicitly in that which He says and has promised to do. He has promised to protect us, to keep us from harm and to provide for every one of our needs. We must be like the little child in that family who looks to his mother and father and believes them, depends upon them, trusts them, places his or her life in their hands without doubt or trepidation, believing that those parents will take care of him.

Unfortunately, in this world, little children learn the hard way through the evil that is perpetrated in this chaotic world led by Satan the Devil. They cease being children far too early. They become hardened very quickly, and they become indoctrinated by the consequences of their environment and the lack of training—the lack of advantage of having the Word of God in their families. And so, they pay the

prices early. They have serious penalties that they bear with them. Yet Jesus Christ hearkens back to the fact and says that we have to receive the Kingdom as a little child. No matter what we've been through, no matter what we have experienced, learned, absorbed and acquired, that element of faith—simple, implicit belief in a parent—is what we're going to have to manifest if we're going to be there. It is a Family that we are called to join. It is the God Family that we look to as the hope for life after death. He wants those within His Family that will trust and absolutely value the promises, and believe Him. So, yes, we must, and can, trust God in and for all things.

Let's notice Matthew 6:24:

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Oh, it's something that many of us try to do. We try to live with one foot in the world and one foot in the Church, so to speak, or obeying God's laws. Because if human beings can find a way to get away with it, we certainly like to have our cake and eat it too, don't we? That is always the natural proclivity. We like to pursue the things of the flesh and have as much fulfillment from physical things of this world that we can get away with, and still be within the scope of that which God will allow in order to have access to His mercy, His blessings and His promises. And yet, Christ says, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Yes, we must live in the world, and we must take account for our physical lives. We must exist; we must provide for our families. I'm going to go through these things extensively at the Feast of Tabernacles this year when I go through the principles of good stewardship. We're going to look at those responsibilities that God has given us, both spiritually as well as physically. They have everything to do with our preparation to inherit eternal life and to be with God in the Millennium, and so we're going to go through those things. But we cannot serve God and mammon.

Therefore I say unto you [verse 25], Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

God is comparing these wild creatures that He made. They don't get to store up resources. They don't have bank accounts. They don't even store up food in barns. They don't prepare or have the opportunity to store things up—to give themselves a physical safety net—and yet God provides for them. Christ is saying, "Are you not much more valuable than any of these creatures?" The admonition is, brethren, that we're also not supposed to be concerned about storing up vast quantities of resources, physically, from which we gain our confidence, but to trust simply that when God says He loves us, He will take care of us and provide for our needs, even if we can't see where it's going to come from the next day.

Now, most of us haven't had to go through trials like that. Some of us have. Some, under the hearing of my voice, have gone through some incredibly tenuous times, and they have lived truly in a state of poverty, without what we consider the basic physical necessities. Yet God has provided, and He has seen them through. He has provided for their actual needs. The big question is—and I'm also going to go through this at the Feast—what really is a need and what is a want? What is it that we really need, brethren, and what is it that we think we need? You see, it all has to do with perception. And based upon the blessings that most of us have enjoyed for so long, we have a far higher expectation of what we think our bare necessities are, than what God knows they are. But if you are even cognizant of those of your brethren scattered around the world who do not even remotely have the physical blessings that most of you enjoy, you might begin to appreciate and to value what it is that God is talking about.

Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

What was the whole point of this dissertation that we just heard Christ speak? It was that human beings lack faith. They lack the faith to believe that God is going to provide for their actual needs and to trust Him implicitly. Verse 31:

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) . . .

Yes, they certainly do. Those that are not called, those who are spiritual Gentiles, are living their lives out upon this earth, not understanding why they were created—what their purpose for being really is. They are setting their own personal goals, trying to create something of value out of their existence—some means to give them a sense of accomplishment and worth. Many people, then, choose the acquisition of physical possessions, success through those manmade principles and orientations, which we know are actually very empty. Just read the Book of Ecclesiastes and you'll find what Solomon has to say about the pursuit of those physical things that men value. In the end, they are all empty.

(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;* and all these things shall be added unto you.

It is the hardest command that we could ever have to fulfill when we're in the heat of trial and difficulty in the flesh. Perhaps we've lost jobs, and we don't know where we're going to derive the income to take care of our families. Perhaps we have health problems—sickness, illness, disease—and we're not sure what's going to happen. What if we die and we're not here to support our loved ones? We may experience any number of trials and difficulties with family relationships, problems that seem insurmountable and out of our control to be able to solve, and yet God says:

. . . seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Oh yes, there is evil and we are going to have trials. We are going to have difficulties as we walk in the flesh, and yet Christ is saying not to dwell on those things. Do not eat yourself up inside, worrying about the problems of tomorrow. Yes, they are going to come. Now, does that mean we shouldn't prepare or make any provision for the future at all? Not at all. We are talking about an orientation of mind

on where our real confidence lies. God says that a man who doesn't take care of his family is a fool and an infidel, and so we had better be taking care of the physical needs. We had better be working hard and applying ourselves in all of those godly principles, but if that's what our confidence is in, brethren, and if that's where we think we're deriving our safety net, then we've got our priorities totally mixed up.

". . . seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness . . ." There's that word "righteousness" again. Seek you first the Kingdom of God as a reward, keeping your eye on the ball and what God has offered, and His righteousness—the responsibility of building holy character, as Mr. Armstrong called it, applying ourselves in that process of redemption, coming out of that which He made us naturally, and putting on instead the very mind of Jesus Christ.

". . . seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." What does it mean? It means, brethren, that when you are faced with a situation that puts you in the valley of indecision, and you're going to have to make a choice between obeying a law of God or doing what seems to be necessary, physically, to bail yourself out, you obey God first. And so, many people, when they're first called to the Truth, find many of these tests upon them immediately, like keeping the Sabbath. Maybe they've had a job, and they've been working on the Sabbath. They come to understand for the first time that we're not to work on the Sabbath, and yet it's their only livelihood. They have no knowledge or way to know when or how they're going to make a living and provide for their family if they don't have this job. Or perhaps it's not a problem with working on the weekly Sabbath, but what about taking off for the Holy Days? What about taking off more than a week to go and attend the Feast of Tabernacles as commanded? You see, there are a lot of employers who won't tolerate it, and so people who come into the Church are faced with those kinds of challenges. And what does God say? ". . . seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness . . ." His righteousness is based upon those fundamental commandments, those laws, including obedience—keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days.

How many of God's people have been, and continue to be, challenged by these tests? How many, even this very year, are going to have to make serious choices about whether or not they're going to be at the Feast of Tabernacles? Maybe they've been most years in the past, but maybe this year there is a special challenge and they're going to have to decide whether it's more important to respond to what they consider a critical physical need, according to human wisdom, or whether they're

going to step out and simply do what God commanded—which is, "I don't care what's going on; I'm going to be at the Feast of Tabernacles because God placed His name there and He said, 'Come before Me.'" Some this year have experienced some serious financial difficulties with jobs and other circumstances, and they may be tested this year in that arena like they've never been tested before. No, this admonition, brethren, does not mean that we do not plan or make provision for the future, but it does mean that we put God's laws first, no matter what difficulty it may cause in the flesh.

What's going to make the difference between those that are able to put God first and those that instead do what makes perfect sense in this world? What's going to make the difference? Faith. The one who has no faith in the promise of God to provide for our needs is going to fend for the self and do the things that make sense to the human mind. Work that job instead of going to the Feast. Work on the Sabbath perhaps, or any number of other things, because that seems to be what's right for self-preservation. Yes, it is the fool, in the eyes of the world, that will say, "I don't care what dilemma I'm in right now or how bad it seems. I don't care if I lose my job; I don't care if my family and I end up on the street. God said to be at the Feast and I'm going to be there. I'm going to trust Him to deliver on His promise when He said, 'I'm going to take care of your needs. You're not going to go hungry. You're not going to be naked. You will be provided for.'" Yes, in the eyes of the world, that's the fool. And if any of you have had unconverted family members who have looked over your shoulder when you've had to make decisions like that and have, in as much, called you a fool, then you understand what I'm talking about. But God made the promise that He would provide everything we need if we put Him first. That's faith; that's real faith.

1 Peter 1 and verse 3:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead [That's the hope of that reward we talked about last time.], To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you [That's the carrot that God put out before us that He wants us to remember and keep our eyes upon. Verse 5:], Who are kept by the power of God *through faith* . . .

How is it that we are preserved on this walk, looking forward to the salvation that is coming when Jesus Christ returns? "Who are kept by the power of God *through faith* unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." That's where we are, brethren. We are in the last time; and in these last days, God raised up a Church, a Body, even like unto the bodies of the past that He raised up through the patriarchs of old and the apostles. He called people out of this world and gave them the priceless opportunity to understand a Truth that's hidden from the rest of this deceived world; and gave us access to the power of God, His Holy Spirit, which we absolutely need if we're going to be successful. He gave us that opening and that opportunity.

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith . . ." If we make it, brethren, if we are there to stand in that day with Jesus Christ and to receive a reward, it's going to be because we each manifested faith. And if we do not manifest faith, we will not be there. That's how simple it is. There are no short cuts. There are no ways to get the answer to the test in the back of the book ahead of time and to circumvent the test of faith. We're not going to cheat it. We're not going to get around it. God is going to make sure that we go through those tests. He's going to put us into circumstances where we have to choose between our natural minds screaming at us that this is what we should do to save ourselves and our families, and over here, the very quiet, subtle voice of the Spirit saying, "Here is the command of God. Walk in that way. Obey." We're going to have to choose. We're going to have to make the right choice if we're going to be there.

Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.

And many of us are. Many of us within this small remnant body, scattered about the face of the earth, are certainly experiencing trials, difficulties and tests in one way or another. The trials are all different, but they all have a common thread. They are those things that God is allowing for purpose because it is the process of developing that character, that ability for us to act in righteousness—to know the difference between right and wrong, and to do the right, even when it goes against everything our carnal mind is telling us to do.

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith [It is a

trial of faith.], being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

When He comes, brethren, how are we going to stand before Him? As those who made the tough choices to prove that we love Him more than anything else? Or will He find someone who defaulted to self-preservation at the expense of the Law?

. . . though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love . . .

No, we have not seen Jesus Christ. We've never seen an apparition. He has never appeared to us in a way that our human senses can appreciate, acknowledge, define, confirm or prove; and yet for those who are called and who are acting on that calling and possess the Holy Spirit, we know He lives. We believe in Him, and we love Him. How do we show that love? We're obeying His commands. We're putting those commandments first in our lives. "Whom having not seen, ye love . . ." That means by commandment-keeping because Christ said, "If you love me, keep my commandments."

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

What is the result of the manifestation of that kind of belief in God and His promises? He's going to give you salvation. He's going to grant you an eternal place in His Family, but you're going to have to believe. I'm going to have to believe. Belief, my dear brethren, is a whole lot more than just standing up and making a profession of it. There are a lot of people that do that. "Oh, I believe in the Lord. Oh, I believe," they say, and they don't even know what it means. Real belief means we act in a different way, based upon that knowledge. It means that even though you can't see Christ and you can't see those tangible laws, you know they are there. You know they are as real as real can be, and therefore, you order your life and the decisions that you make according to that knowledge.

It's like you're the only one who can see this piano that's sitting over here, and no one else in the room can see it. Because you see it, you walk around it. You make

a conscious decision, with that knowledge, not to run into it and hurt yourself; whereas everyone else, categorized by the world, doesn't see the reality, even though it's there. They continually run into it, and they pay the penalty, and they bruise themselves, and they fall and hurt themselves; and you're the only one who's walking around it. Because you take a sidestep, they look at you like you're weird, not even recognizing that they're the ones because they don't see the reality. They're paying the price for breaking a law of God. That's what all of God's spiritual laws are like. They are real! And you have been given the priceless gift of knowing them, but the people around you don't see them. And so when you obey them, you look like the fool. Yet, by breaking them and ignoring them, the rest of the world continues to stub their toe and to pay every price by breaking those priceless laws to which they are subject.

Well, it takes faith, brethren, to act upon what you know, and to know it. As Mr. Raymond Cole said, "To know that you know it," even when you can't tangibly prove it to another single human being. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Faith—real belief in God and those laws so that we act upon it—results in salvation, the reward that we all want.

Next, brethren, as Mr. Armstrong wrote, "We believe . . . that God hears and literally answers the believing prayers of His children who keep His commandments—according as He has promised in His Word . . ." We believe God hears and literally answers the believing prayers of His children who keep His commandments. Let's notice Matthew 21 and verse 21, where we also find confirmation that the key to receiving answers to our prayers is putting God first and obeying His commands. I know it sounds so simple, but it's the hardest thing we find to do.

Matthew 21:21:

Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

This is a principle that I think most of us can't even begin to comprehend. It's just so out there—to think that any human being could really have the faith to command a mountain to be moved and it would happen. Of course, we understand those things in proper context. One who is acting in legitimate faith because they're

obeying God's commands—they understand God's purpose and His will—is not going to be asking anything contrary to the will of God. You see, God never promised that He's going to give a human being the power just to flippantly put on a demonstration. No, there would have to be a legitimate need. There may be a need for that sometime before the return of His Son, and who knows what kind of exploits are going to be done by the people of God and by those particular servants that God is going to raise up and call to do that end-time work—to warn the world and to prepare the way. Who knows what kind of magnificent things you're going to see, but you're going to see it manifested by those who have faith and who are acting by the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill something within the will of God. That Spirit is so powerful and that faith is so strong that when it's according to the will of God, it can even be manifested by the moving of mountains.

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Now, that's an incredible promise. I also know that we all face, and have faced, those circumstances where we get frustrated because we have problems and difficulties in our lives and we feel like God has not solved it, whatever it may be. It's frustrating and we say, "What am I doing wrong? God promised, and He said He would answer our prayers if we just ask and if we believe." Remember, brethren, believing is predicated upon knowledge of the Truth and acting upon it. We believe only if we're putting Him first above all other things. Now, there are certain answers we might not receive because it's simply not according to His will. The Apostle Paul set the example—we don't have time to turn to it, but you're aware of the story. Paul asked God three times, beseeching Him to remove a particular affliction, which was more than likely a physical affliction that affected his eyesight. He was probably almost blind, and yet fulfilling his commission in all of those strenuous and harrowing travels to serve the congregations that he raised up in God's name throughout Asia Minor. And so, he asked God, probably for the restoration of his eyesight, and God said, "No." His blessings were sufficient for Paul to accomplish what He intended him to do, without having that gift.

So, there might be a reason, brethren, that you or I are going to bear a certain weakness, deficit, or trial. If we are, then it is intended that we not be defeated by it—that we don't use it as an excuse for why we can't accomplish everything God requires of us, spiritually. If it is something that God intends, or is willing, to heal, to solve or to remove, we cannot, then, turn away from our responsibility to search ourselves and to see if there is something within our lives that we are allowing which is a state of unbelief. Are we guilty of breaking some commandment, some principle,

somewhere, which is like an idol in our lives, which is making it so that our prayers are not literally heard and answered? Now, no other member in the Church can look at my life or your life, or vice versa, and make that call. That's why God said not to judge because we can't know when it comes to someone else's life. But you and I have that responsibility for self-evaluation to determine if we are doing everything that we know is right in fulfilling the keeping of those laws to the best of our ability. Or, are we harboring some wrong orientation of mind or something that God considers an idol, which is actually muting our prayers so that He doesn't respond? Those are the things we have to evaluate.

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." But understand first, if you really believe, then your prayers are going to be asking for those things that are within His will. Many human beings ask all kinds of things from God, but because they don't understand what God is doing and what His laws are, they ask amiss—as the Apostle said, to heap it upon the lusts of their flesh. If we're asking legitimately for a need that is not contrary to the will of God and it is something that He is willing to solve because there's not a reason that He wants us to bear it, then it is an opportunity in our control to find those things that we need to purge out so that God will hear our prayers and respond.

Leviticus 26 and verse 3. Here's the promise that God made to ancient Israel, which applies just as much to spiritual Israel today—the Church. "If ye walk in my statutes . . ." Now, see, right from the beginning, that tells you we're not just speaking about knowing the statutes. It's not just knowing the Ten Commandments and being able to quote them. Walking in those statutes is a whole lot more difficult than just knowing what they are. "If ye walk in my statutes . . ." That means, if you are developing character, if you are putting on righteousness—not only knowing the difference between right and wrong, but choosing the right—"If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then . . ." Now we're going to read a whole laundry list of blessings that God has promised to give to those who can do what we just said in the first phrase.

If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and

none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you. And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new.

This is very likely a reference to the faith requirement of keeping the land Sabbath. Why was it that Israel was forced to eat the old store? It was because of one of those faith commands that God gave that said to rest the land in the seventh year, even though, physically, you're not going to want to do it. You need those crops for your livelihood. And what kind of an individual is it that's really going to be able to let their land, their livelihood, lie fallow for an entire year and not plant any crops? That's like telling us today, brethren, that you're going to stay home from work and not make any money for the next year, and trust that God is going to provide for your needs anyway. He made the provision for how He's going to do it, and I don't want to get off on that because I'm also going to cover that at the Feast this year. But He made a promise and said, "If you obey me and do what I'm commanding, I'm going to bless you doubly in the sixth year. I'm going to give you double crops in the sixth year so that you're going to have enough, not only to feed your family in the sixth year, but you're going to have enough for the whole next year when you're not going to plant. Not only that, it's going to be enough so that you have enough for the whole year following," because in the eighth year, or the first year of the next cycle, they were going to have to plant their spring crops and wait until the fall of that next year before they even bore the fruit of it. So really, they weren't going to have anything to eat for two years. And so, God blessed them in the sixth year with enough to get them through the sixth, seventh and eighth years until the crops of that eighth year, or the first year of the next cycle, came in.

Now, who is it that would obey that command? Certainly not the one who didn't trust God or believe that He would follow through. No, you see, most human beings would say, "I don't think so. If I don't plant in the seventh year, I'm not going to have anything to eat and my family is going to starve. It only makes sense; so that's what I'm going to do." And yet, God set up a system specifically to test them. Yes, He made it hard. Why did He make them jump through the hoops? Because He's offering something so valuable. Who else can have a God who's going to

protect them from all of their enemies so that no one can harm them? They have peace from the sword; they have wealth and fruits; their families multiply; they have every good thing. You see, there's a price for that kind of protection, and the only price is that we believe God. It's demanding to have that kind of belief, but that's what He said.

And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new.  
And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.

He promised to be their personal God, that nation alone. The same God has now called all of you as spiritual Israel into this Body, the very Body of Christ, and given you the very same promises of protection, help, peace and salvation from our difficulties and trials. All we have to do is believe that He lives, believe in the promises that He has made to us, and prove it by acting upon it and doing what He said to do. When we falter in faith and instead do what the human mind tells us we ought to do to save ourselves, it is showing our unbelief in the God who made us. God gave us His simple Truth codified in a Law. He said to obey and that He would take care of us if we put Him first, but human beings can rarely accomplish that task.

Ancient Israel failed in spite of all that God laid out and offered them—the Promised Land, protection and peace. They couldn't do it. They had proven that God was a powerful Being. They saw all of His manifested works, did they not? And they couldn't do it. The downfall of God's chosen people has always been a lack of faith. We can look at it and say, "Well, no, it's because they broke the Sabbath, adopted idol worship, adopted all of these heathen practices, and they did this and that." But all of those things come back to one focal point. It was a lack of faith. That's what God said.

Let's notice Deuteronomy 32 and verse 12: "So the [Eternal] alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." Oh yes, they started out okay. They saw all those manifested powers and the glorious events that God brought to pass to bring them out of Egypt with a high hand, and so they believed. They believed for the time. They knew they were dealing with a Being that had incredible power and that there was no God like their God. They started out okay. ". . . there was no strange god with him." They were totally focused on the Creator God.

He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape. [He gave them everything. Verse 15:] But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked . . .

That's what all human beings do, brethren, according to their natural natures. We kick against the laws when they become inconvenient. When we're put in a position to have to choose to obey God, which is totally inconvenient and seems to be our doom physically, we kick and turn instead to our own devices.

. . . thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and *lightly esteemed* the rock of his salvation.

What did ancient Israel do? They took God for granted. Once He manifested that He could help them and did help them, they began to expect it; and then, they began to get lazy in the blessings that He had provided. They began to turn with a wandering eye to other things that they thought they needed to make them happy, and began to turn against the very laws of God.

. . . he forsook God which made him, and *lightly esteemed* the rock of his salvation. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful . . .

Who is that Rock? The very same One who followed them in the desert, protected them and provided for all of their needs, was the One who became Jesus Christ. It was the very same Being, and they forsook Jesus Christ. They became unmindful of their physical Savior, even as the Church of the last days forsook Jesus Christ and became unmindful of their Savior.

. . . and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the [Eternal] saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them . . .

Why is it that Israel lost the ability to cry out to God and to receive the petition of their hearts in prayer? Because they turned from keeping the commandments and turned to their own human wisdom. Now, they didn't view it as if they were serving pagan gods. They didn't say, "Let's turn away from this God who's giving us all of this powerful protection, peace and good things, and let's forsake Him and go and embrace these other gods of wood, stone and metal that we know are dead." That's not what their thinking was at all. No, they thought that they had just found a better way to serve this great God who they claimed to love. Of course, all the while, they were turning to their own human devices to save themselves, but they were coming up with great explanations why this was really a good thing and why God shouldn't mind at all. In fact, He should be very, very pleased with them. So, they didn't think they were turning away from their God at all. When Jeroboam set up two great golden calves in Bethel and Dan, threw out the Levites and replaced them with his own priests, and moved the Feast of Tabernacles from the seventh month to the eighth month, they didn't think they were violating God's Law. They thought they were just kind of improving on things. They were still worshiping that same God—in their minds they were—but God is the One who defines what idol worship is, what idolatry and apostasy is. And God just tells it like it is.

Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them [He wouldn't hear their prayers any longer.], I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.

There you have it. What was the root cause of every problem that they faced? It was a lack of faith—they simply didn't believe. They didn't have the heart to trust in the promises of God and to put themselves in His hands like a little child—simply believing against all odds that God was going to perform what He said He was going to do. You see, it takes the simplicity of the mind of a child to have that kind of faith and confidence when our education, our training and our school of hard knocks have taught us to be weary, to fend for ourselves and not to become a victim, to take care of ourselves and to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. Don't fall prey here, don't fall prey there, and be clever. And yet, He said it takes the mind of a little child if we're going to be in the Kingdom of God. We simply believe our Father, and no matter how foolish we look, we're willing to trust Him to deliver us.

John 20 and verse 24. It wasn't just the ancient Israelites. No, even those that God called when Jesus Christ walked in the flesh in His own ministry in the first century, had to learn the same lessons. He called disciples, and He trained them in preparation for commissioning them as apostles. And guess what? They had the same human nature. They had the very same weaknesses; they had the same proclivities; they had the same lack of faith. In spite of all they had seen for three-and-a-half years of the miracles that Jesus preformed, they were weak in faith. And so here, now, we have the story of doubting Thomas. Christ had been crucified, He'd been resurrected, and now He was coming back in this final period of time as He was training them and giving those final lessons before His ascension to heaven.

John 20, verse 24:

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

He wanted proof. How many people are out there now, even of our former members, who have experienced all manner of certification of the power of God in this Way of Life? For years, they experienced the blessings of divine healing, protection and physical blessings from obeying all of those laws. And yet now, they are so hardened, and they're saying, "If I can't prove it for my own self from the Bible, you're not going to convince me." You can show them the proofs that they used to accept as proof. You know, they always said, "Prove all things," and once, they would have told you they had proved it. Now they're saying they didn't prove it at all. They changed their minds. Now they want more proof.

. . . I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and *be not faithless, but believing*. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed . . .

So, yes, Thomas got to see this great miracle. Here was Christ, this spirit being now, temporarily manifesting Himself in a fleshly body, still with those wounds that He received on the stake; and He allowed Thomas to fulfill his requirement for proof.

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. [Oh, now he believed. He'd gotten his proof.] Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: *blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

What Thomas did wasn't worth that much. Anybody given enough physical proof that they can't deny, is likely to believe. Who is it that is worthy of all the wealth that God has set aside in store for someone in His Kingdom? Those who respond to a call, who recognize that which they have been given. Even when they can't tangibly put their hands upon it, they still believe; and then, they live their lives in a way to set the example to prove that they know God is real, that His laws are real, and that they really do believe it. That's what God is looking for.

The last-day Church, brethren, was no different. They did precisely the same thing. Notice Hebrews 3 and verse 7:

Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation . . .

Here, we're talking about those stony hearts, the ones who have experienced the college of hard knocks, who have learned to be clever and steely in their determination to evaluate everything and to trust nothing and no one, and to require proof because they've been through the fights, the wars and the trials of this physical life. They've paid the penalties, and they've learned the hard way; and so, they have steeled themselves against believing anything by faith.

Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

They had proved it. They were like Thomas who had been able to stick his hands in the very side of Christ Himself and receive tangible proof—all the things that He did for them in the wilderness to prove that He was their God and unlike any other God. They saw. They had no excuse for not knowing.

Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

Is He saying that He never taught them the Law, that He never gave them the Ten Commandments, and they never read or understood what God required? No, they had those things. They were schooled to know what God expected of them. But when He says, ". . . they have not known my ways," it means it never took root in their hearts and their minds. They never really learned to believe it, so it was as if they never had it. "So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)" For them, that meant the physical land of Palestine—the Promised Land. For us, brethren, in the spiritual antitype, it means the Kingdom of God—that Family.

So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you [Who's he speaking to? Even those upon whom the ends of the world are come, those called into the very last-day Church of which you are a part.] an evil heart of unbelief, in departing . . .

There you have it. It was never that they didn't have the Truth. It was that they wouldn't hold on to the Truth. They were willing, in time, to trade the commands of God for that which they thought would save them, not realizing that they were sawing the limb off behind them—chipping away the very foundation under their feet every time they did it.

. . . lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

It means that we let carnal things, worries, cares, concerns in this life—whether it's money, family relationships, health or anything else—come between us and obeying what God said simply to do.

. . . lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, *if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.*

I don't understand, for the life of me, why all of these people who were once in that Body, baptized to believe and practice the very same things that we did for the

first forty years of the work of Mr. Armstrong, cannot recognize that they are not holding fast to the beginning of their confidence. You can't hold fast to something if you have overthrown it and replaced it with something totally new and different in the false form of "growing in grace and knowledge." It is totally inconsistent with the admonition to those who want to be in that Kingdom.

. . . if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;  
While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts,  
as in the provocation.

It's saying, brethren, don't be like the adult or the teenager, spiritually, who thinks he has figured it all out and has learned enough lessons, has had his ears chewed from hard experience so that now he thinks he is wise enough to fend for himself, to take care of his own needs and to pull himself up by his own bootstraps. Don't be like that when it comes to the Law of God. Somehow we've got to be able to get rid of those stony hearts and to recapture that orientation of a little child—the one who simply believes in faith the promises of the Father, without doubting and without question, and is willing to act.

. . . harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

No, there were two. There were two who didn't provoke Him. Who were they? Joshua and Caleb—the only two who had that kind of belief. He brought them right up to the edge of the Jordan River; the Promised Land was before them. All they had to do was believe God's promise and walk across that river and take it; but, no, they saw the great, armed, fenced cities with the giants of men who possessed the land and who were entrenched with all of the wealth and the power to make war. And here, this vagabond group in the desert said, "How are we going to stand against these fortified cities and all these great warriors? We're helpless." Joshua and Caleb said, "God promised it to us. Come on, we'll take it. They're not going to stand before us. He promised to give it to us. It's ours already; all we have to do is step forward in faith." And the rest of them said, "Woe is me, I'm going to die. I wish I had stayed in Egypt where things were at least better than being here to be slaughtered."

Now, do you have or have you had problems that are equivalent to that in your lives, brethren? I bet some of you have. I bet some of you are going through some

right now. You are up against that which appears to be insurmountable odds, physically, just like Israel faced when looking across the Jordan River at those fenced cities and saying, "There's no way. If I walk across there, I'm going to get killed. There's no way that this is going to turn out good." Yet God said, "Here I am. I promise you that all of my power and my force as a Creator God is going to back you up, save you and deliver you, and you're going to perform miracles at my hand." All we have to do is believe. Israel didn't believe after all they saw, and so they didn't inherit the Promised Land. They all had to walk for the remainder of that forty-year period and die, their carcasses falling in the wilderness one by one. It was their children, then, that went in and inherited the land. Again, the analogy is that those who are like little children are going to inherit that Promised Land. It was the children of Israel who inherited it the first time. It's also those who are childlike in faith, in confidence in God, that are going to inherit that spiritual possession of God's Kingdom. Verse 15:

While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

It has always been unbelief. It has always been a lack of faith which has been the downfall of God's people. Continuing in chapter 4 and verse 1:

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest [that Kingdom], any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them . . .

If anyone has any doubt that the very gospel message that Christ brought and taught through the apostles was the very same message that was given to Moses, here is absolute confirmation that it was. It is also confirmation that anybody in the last days who is or was part of the true Church, received the very same gospel message. Now, if we received, through revelation from Jesus Christ—the same God who walked with Israel in the desert—that same gospel message from the beginning through a chosen servant, pray tell me how we can grow in grace and knowledge by changing to a totally different doctrine? It just doesn't add up, and it won't hold water.

For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them [same message, same gospel]: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

Oh yes, God is carrying out a master plan that He determined before the foundation of the world, and His plan is being executed. But that plan includes our choices with our free moral agency, whether or not we're going to love it enough to believe and to act upon those gifts. They failed because it was not "mixed with faith in them that heard it." The problem is, you see, ancient Israel has an excuse. God didn't give them the capacity to be able to succeed, because a human mind, without the Holy Spirit dwelling within it, cannot manifest that true faith. The problem for us is that we have been given the missing ingredient. As spiritual Israel, we have been given access to the missing ingredient, the Holy Spirit, to have the mind of Christ living and dwelling within us to motivate us and to give us the power to reject the doubt and the unbelief, and to act in faith, to purge out—to soften—that stony heart and to have that mind, that heart of a little child, to simply believe our heavenly Father. He gave us access to it. So, do you know what that means? If we fail, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

The ancient Israelites will get their first opportunity for spiritual salvation in a resurrection. They were never given that opportunity. They were only promised physical things, which they didn't inherit because they didn't believe, but their one chance at the Holy Spirit is coming. Ours is right now, and if we blow it, there's no second chance. Our unbelief is a death sentence for all eternity. Our lack of faith will take away our opportunity to receive that promise.

"For we which have believed do enter into rest . . ." And you know what, brethren? If you really believe what God gave you and you're acting upon those commands and principles right now, you have a form of rest, even now. The great rest is at the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His Millennium, but when you act in faith now to obey God, you're resting, even as you are today on the weekly Sabbath Day. All of your neighbors are going about their business, doing what they think is right. You, if you're keeping the Sabbath with the right frame of mind, have rest. Even in the midst of your trials—no matter what your worries might be financially, health-wise, family-wise—you have an opportunity for peace of mind, rest,

because of your confidence in the God who called you and is preserving you. When you keep the annual Holy Days, you have an opportunity for a special rest. When we keep the Feast of Tabernacles, coming up in short order, we're going to have an opportunity to picture that spiritual rest which is soon coming. God is providing all of the opportunities to have the down payment of the value of that Way of Life, if we're taking advantage of it now, in order to motivate us and give us the strength that we need to walk through and pass the tests that are yet to come.

Hardening our hearts means giving up on God and His promises. When we don't obey what we know is right, it's because we don't believe that God is going to save us. Abraham was counted as righteous because he simply believed God. I went through some of these things recently. I'll let you read Romans 4, verses 2 and 3, which simply says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness," or as Mr. Armstrong called it, "character." Abraham believed God. How did he prove that he believed God? Did he just stand up and tell all his neighbors and friends, "I believe God"? No, he proved it in the crucible of trial when God said, "Take this son, now, that you've waited twenty-five years for, who was born to you of a wife who should not have been able to have a child in her old age. And I gave him to you." And now, here is this lad Isaac, probably about twelve years old, and God said, "I want you to take him up to this mountain and sacrifice him on an altar." And like a little child who has faith in his father, Abraham simply said, "Yes, Lord. I don't know how this is going to work out. I can't see how any good thing is going to come. But you said it, you commanded it, and I know that I can trust you and that things will work out if I do what you said." He simply believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. No, Abraham was not a perfect man. He manifested his own weaknesses in the flesh, but the one thing he had is that he believed those promises. He believed in the God with whom he was dealing, and that's what made Abraham absolutely unique—his faith. That's why God made the covenant with him by which all of us have now benefitted.

We believe these promises, and back to the fundamental wording, ". . . including physical healing, deliverance from temptation and trouble, providing the way for every actual need." Mr. Armstrong wrote that part of this faith, part of the belief in the promises of God, includes acting on it in the very details of our lives, in all of these trials that we face. God did promise physical healing, but we have to be willing to place ourselves in His hands without condition. It's hard for human beings to do that. Very often, brethren, we put time limits on God. We don't think we do, and I know we don't see it. But most of the time, when we're afflicted with something in the

flesh—an injury or an illness, especially if it gets very serious, painful or life threatening—we want God's answer right away. So, yes, we go to the ministry, and through the ministry, we ask God to heal. But in essence, it's like we put a time limit out there and say, "Well, if God is going to heal me, He's going to do it within a month. So if I'm not healed within a month, I'm going to say God's answer is no, and I have no choice but to turn to my own devices to try to relieve my pain, my anguish, and to try and save my life." We don't say it in those words, but many times, that's really what we're doing.

Job 13:13—you knew I was going to quote it. "Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what will." Job was resolved in his trial, in the excruciating pain and the suffering that he was experiencing. And these so-called friends were giving him all of this great advice, which was nothing but foolishness, and yet he said, ". . . let come on me what will." He was steeled that he was not going to be bent. He was not going to be broken by the trial that he was facing to doubt the God who made him.

. . . let come on me what will. Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand? [Verse 15:] Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

What ways? The ways that he had been taught—the laws, the commands of God. He knew what they were; he knew what was required, and he said, "I don't care how bad it is. I am not going to forsake the ways that God gave which I have adopted as my own." "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him . . ."—even if Job couldn't understand why. And that's the question he's asking through the entire book, "Why, why, why?" But even though he had lessons to learn, and even though he asked and he didn't understand the reasons, he never doubted the power and the veracity of God and His will to do it His way. And so he said, "Even if I can't understand why I'm going through this and what I did that was so wrong, though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him." He absolutely put himself in the hands of God. And you know what? This is why this is so important: Each one of you had your name written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world. I'm telling you, God knew who you were and who you were going to be when you were born. He called you and gave you that priceless gift. You're not here by accident. Now, do you think or do I think that He is going to allow anything to happen to us that is not within His will, as priceless as you are in His sight? Do you think you're really subject to time and chance? Do you really think that God is just going to abandon you and leave you

with no option? Or, is it just possible that He wants us to learn to steel ourselves with the resolve that Job had, who said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"?

I know it's hard. I do not take it for granted, brethren—especially because I know I've never faced a life-threatening illness of myself or a family member. So I'm not telling you that I'm the epitome of the example that you can look to. If I haven't been through the trial, I certainly can't stand to make any declarations about what I would do under that kind of a trial. But like you, I know what we were taught is right. I have no doubt what God would require me to do, and requires you to do—to absolutely trust Him and to wait.

I don't care how bad it gets. So what if we have an illness that's creeping in and destroying the entire body? We know that it's His will to let some go to sleep for the current evil time, and some of our very beloved brethren have. God has taken them out of the way. Does that cause us to doubt? Not at all. But what if it's His intent for some of us not to die? Well, first, if it is His intent to take us out of the way, then why would we want to stand in the way of that will? Concern for our family members, our loved ones? Is God not capable of providing for their needs too? He has made them promises as well. So, if it's His will to take us out of the way, why are we going to fret and fight against Him? If it's His will to save us in faith and to show a monumental miracle by our act to trust Him, then maybe that's what we need to do. And then, maybe He will step in, even at the last minute when humanly speaking we're dead or almost dead, and yet we allow God to provide the miracle to save. I'm not talking about things that are easy. But, brethren, we can't get to the point where we lower the bar of expectation to make it easier. God gave us incredible promises, but we have to believe—and I mean, we have to believe it all the way. We must be willing to step out and do all of these things—including keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days and paying our tithes, and put all of our other problems and cares in His hands and seek His deliverance.

We don't wait for God to make it easy on us. That's another tendency, and I think I covered this in the spring Holy Days this year. We experience a problem, and we say, "Well, I want to obey you, Father. As soon as you make it possible for me to tithe, as soon as I can afford to tithe, I'll start tithing." Or, "As soon as I can find another job that doesn't make me work on the Sabbath, I'll quit working on the Sabbath. So, God, you send me a new job, hand it to me on a silver platter, and I'll obey you." No, there's no condition. God says, "You believe my promises. I told you I'm going to save you. I told you I'm going to provide for every one of your

needs. Now you step out and do what I told you to do—no questions asked—and then wait and see if I don't provide as I promised." You see, that's what Abraham did. Abraham didn't say, "Well, ok, I know you said you want me to sacrifice Isaac, but I want a written contract ahead of time that you promise to resurrect him immediately afterward if I do. Or give me some other certification that this is going to work out right." No, we don't get to do it that way. That's not belief. That's what doubting Thomas did. That's saying, "Let Christ stand in front of me and let me put my hand in His side, and then I'll believe." God says to spiritual Israel, "Nope, not going to work that way. I'm going to make you trust me based upon the things you've already proven." If we look back at our lives and see what He has done for us, brethren—and we don't get short-sighted or start losing our memories—we should be able to verify the very interventions that God has made repeatedly. He wants us to think about those things, and now walk forward with our current trials and say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Faith must grow in us one step at a time. It's just like Mr. Raymond Cole said: It is a ladder, and we have to hit the early rungs on the ladder if we're going to hit the more important ones later on. If you miss too many rungs, you're going to be out of luck.

Luke 17:5–6:

And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

If we don't have that faith yet, brethren, then we've got a lot of work to do. But faith is the key ingredient for this redemptive process and achieving the very reward that God has set before us.