

Will I Find Faith

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung 7/16/2016

God the Father and the Word, Jesus Christ, devised a Plan wherein they would share their existence - their love - their life - and call many sons and daughters to glory (Hebrews 2:10).

God determined from before the foundation of the world that the Messiah would come and that He would have a body of brethren to reign and rule throughout the millennium with Him (Revelation 5:10, 20:4).

Revelation 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Revelation 20:4 ...they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

And so it was determined, from the very beginning of God's Plan for mankind, that Jesus would be *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*. (Revelation 13:8) That is how far back the Plan goes, and it includes us.

To reign and rule with Christ we have to be like Christ, and we have to have the love, the forgiveness, the mercy, the giving, and the laying down of our life, attributes that Christ displayed.

"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of [the will of] God." (John 1:12-13)

It is impossible to honor Christ the Head while we are disregarding and dishonoring His Body, the church brethren, for whom He shed His blood. And so the question arises, "Where are the true Christians of today?"

Where are those Christians who are actually living their faith so as to be in the first resurrection and be in the millennium with Jesus Christ? Is a true Christian one who only professes to be? Is a true Christian one who only hopes to be included in the category of Christians? Is a true Christian one who only says, "Lord, Lord?" Those who say, Lord, Lord, think that they are very religious, but they feather their nest and they get comfortable, and they are happy and they have their reward right now. They are fooled and Satan takes them away.

We have entered a time of alarming lawlessness in our nation. When the government tramples on our God given constitutional rights with impunity, how much longer do we have before our religious broadcast and internet services are suspended? Once taken for granted, our liberty is now being eroded and our religious freedom is being encroached upon. These are dangerous times – not only for our traditional American customs but for our **spiritual** lives as well.

Will the people of God be able to withstand the onslaught of chaos and disorder in government and society all about us and endure spiritually unto the end?

*"He that shall **endure** unto the end, the same shall be saved."* (Mark 13:13).

Extremely trying days lie just ahead for those of us in the Church of God.

Everything that we hold sacred will soon be overthrown – everything, that is, except our **faith**, which must continue until the very end.

Over and over in the Bible the brethren are admonished to live lives of overcoming, and to remain **faithful** to the end. Should we expect to find abundant faith just prior to the return of Jesus Christ, or should we anticipate finding very little faith among God's people? Over the last few decades we have seen a terrible erosion of faith.

Luke 18:1 And [Jesus] spoke a parable unto [His disciples] to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

Luke 18:2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

Luke 18:3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

The widow was a woman of FAITH. She would not take "No" for an answer. She kept knocking and knocking – day and night – ever petitioning the judge for just recourse.

Matthew 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

Matthew 7:8 For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.

This is speaking about "**Faith**." This widow woman would not stop seeking a remedy because she had been wronged by her adversary. Jesus is commending her **faith**. Her persistence, if you will, but she had tenacity. She wasn't about to let the matter drop. All she wanted was a fair and equitable settlement. The problem was that the Judge just did not want to be bothered.

Luke 18:4 And he [the Judge] would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

Luke 18:5 Yet because this widow troubles me [wearies me, gives me no peace], I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

Morning, noon and night, the widow woman stayed on the Judge's case.

Luke 18:6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

Jesus tells His disciples – this parable is not about the widow woman and a Judge – No! It is about your Faith in going to God. This is about having the Faith to go to God over and over.

Luke 18:7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

I've always thought it interesting that Jesus would be humorously self-deprecating in comparing Himself to a slow to respond Judge. Then Jesus goes on to make another point. He says that in the end-time, **faithless** people will not be beseeching God as they should.

It seems clear from the following Scripture that there is a scarcity of faith in this end time – especially among the brethren of God's Church. Jesus asked a very frightening and sobering question and stated a very grave comment about our day. He asked the question that probably shocked the original disciples:

Luke 18:8 I tell you that [God] will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, **shall he find faith on the earth?**

In spite of the fact that these are Jesus' words – it seemed to me that this was an absurdity! Of course, I reasoned, "There will be lots and lots of people of faith when Jesus returns to set up His Father's Kingdom." But, Jesus is intimating just the opposite – there will be few people of faith.

Luke 18:9 And he spoke this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

Why would Jesus ask such a stern rhetorical question if the great majority of the Church brethren would actually be growing in faith as we come to the end? Obviously, many will not continue in Faith until the end.

Enduring to the end is not a matter of relying on our own strength and will-power. If we rely on ourselves – we will ultimately fail.

We have the example of the Israelites who had the **faith** to leave Egypt, but **lacked** the **faith** in God to give them a victorious entry into the Promised Land. This is what Jesus is warning us of – don't fall short.

Hebrews 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest [the Kingdom of God], any of you should seem to come short of it.

Hebrews 4:2 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.

Paul illustrated that it is possible to lose our salvation.

"Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest [millennium and Kingdom of God], **lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.**" (Hebrews 4:11)

Jesus clearly warns us that that is exactly what is happening in the churches of God today. Israel did not endure unto the end – the promised rest (Hebrews 4:1-2).

Unlike the ancient Israelites, we have been given the **greater promises** and means to "*hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for He is faithful that promised.*" (Hebrews 10:23)

Our faith, therefore, is in God – not in ourselves to be able to endure whatever trial or test that may come. It is God who governs the timing and intensity of trials so that we may learn to rely more and more on Him. To avoid the trial is to avoid the tremendous blessing of growing closer to God.

Do we have the **proper faith** in God to deliver us in every trial and bring us securely to the Kingdom of God? Not the type of **faith** of knowing and believing alone. But the sort of **faith** that the widow woman had – that of actively doing. Jesus indicated that conditions would worsen as the end approaches:

"The night comes when no man can work." (John 9:4)

We sometimes think that we have all the time in the world. Copious time will not continue indefinitely for the brethren. Will we be in good standing with God when He brings everything to an abrupt end?

"He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." (Romans 9:28)

Jesus says to those members in the last day that **our righteousness** does not measure up to His expectations of us.

Revelation 3:17 Because thou say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

Yes, we are rich and increased with sermons and literature, and places to attend services... Let's not **take it for granted** that we will always be able to tune in to a plethora of literature and sermons.

*"Behold, the days come, says the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of **hearing** the words of the Lord."* (Amos 8:11)

Not only will Sabbath services not be available, those who continue to express their faith will be persecuted. Even now, long time, well meaning brethren, are being singled out and persecuted in God's Church. No one is taking a stand to defend them. Often it is the wayward ministry demanding that "their authority" be recognized. When the put-out and disfellowshipped brethren beg for recognition and reinstatement to their local congregation they are made an example of so that all the other brethren will learn to submit in fear. Jesus said:

"They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever kills you will think that he doeth God service." (John 16:2)

The message is very clear; now is the time to draw near to God.

"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while he is near." (Isaiah 55:6)

These warning Scriptures show that it will be a small minority of the brethren who will be fully living up to God's expectations of His people. It is not enough to be in a friendly congregation – there are many denominations that have pleasant services. It is not enough to be in a congregation that keeps the Sabbath – the Jews do that. It is not enough to be in a tithe paying congregation – there are Protestants who do that. Millions of so called "Christians" are missing the mark terribly.

What kind of **faith** is Jesus looking for among His people? What makes a **faithful** Christian? Who in God's Church is fully pleasing in His sight?

A lot of people go to Church on Saturday in some group where they do not have to be accountable for their thoughts and actions, or even address the things that are going on in their life. They like to have some anonymity, and just sit in the congregation, sing some hymns and listen to some sermons, and go home justified. Jesus Christ warns us about that kind of religious observance.

What is it that makes us Christians who live according to Godliness? Who is living their Christianity?

Hebrews 10:23 Let us **hold fast the profession of our Faith** without wavering; (for he is **faithful** that promised;)

Yes, God is **faithful** – and He is telling us exactly what is happening. What is supposed to happen in our interaction with each other?

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another to **provoke unto love** and to good works:

Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is;

Why do so many brethren think that they have fulfilled their responsibility to God by showing up to see their friends every Sabbath.

Hebrews 10:25b ...but **exhorting one another**: [imploring and entreating one another to do Christian works] and so much the **more**, as ye see the day approaching.

How many attend Sabbath services for the purpose of provoking all the others to love and good works? How many could define Godly love – or good works for that matter (1John 5:3)?

1John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.

How many are actually laying their lives down daily as Jesus Christ gave us example (John 15:13)?

John 15:12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, **as** I have loved you.

How do you measure Godly love? Jesus set the standard for Godly love. Jesus paid the ultimate price by dying for us.

John 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus did it - and He says to us, "*That ye love one another, **as** I have loved you.*" How many brethren even know what that means to lay down their lives (1John 3:16)?

1John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

It is not some obscure concept hidden in the Scriptures – why is it not being taught? Jesus clearly tells us who it is that is going to make it into the Kingdom of God. How many know how to overcome Satan (Revelation 12:11)?

Revelation 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren [Satan] is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. Jesus says that we each have to defeat Satan – just as He did.

Revelation 12:11 And they overcame [Satan] by:

1. the blood of the Lamb, and
2. by the word of their testimony; and
3. they loved not their **lives unto the death.**

Are we striving with every ounce of our being to imitate the life of Jesus Christ? Paul said that we are to **walk in faith**: That means that we are to **live** our Christianity.

"We do not cease to pray for you that you will walk worthy of the Lord pleasing Him in all that you do, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Colossians 1:9-10)

Brethren, it is not safe to think that we are all doing just fine; having all the faith in the world. Shouldn't we heed God's warning to us and aim high, seeking to have that faith of which Jesus spoke? Why are so many brethren letting down, giving up and falling away?

Did they ever understand the Truth? Are they still looking for **great** numbers of members in one human organization and a structured religion of do's and don'ts - so that they do not have to learn to build character or make decisions? Why do some brethren compromise by substituting nit-picking incidental religiosity for the great true **faith** of Jesus Christ? Our purpose in being here is to help them!

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, **restore** such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

We don't simply say, "I'll put it in God's hands." No! God just dumped it in our laps to do something about it. Do like Jesus did - and die trying to help them into the Kingdom.

Galatians 6:2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

It takes effort to stay on course - to endure to the end - to stand strong. This is an ardent cry to hold fast to the Word of God. We look forward to being in the 1000 year millennium with Christ as our Head ' and we the glorified spiritual body.

"[The Lord Jesus Christ] shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." (Philippians 3:21)

"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:6)

Let's carry some of what we are seeing to its conclusion ' let's put the pieces together. The process that Christians go through is this: They must be called of God; they must be chosen of God; and they must be faithful to God ' enduring until the very end (Revelation 17:14).

*"[God] hath saved us, and called us with **an holy calling**, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose, [Plan] and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus **before** the world began."* (2 Timothy 1:9)

Brethren, there are many philosophies that would draw us away from the straight-forward way of life in Jesus Christ. Some people are actually looking for loop-holes to get out of what we must do to become more like Jesus Christ.

There are those who would not keep the commandments or follow Christ - except for the hope of the Place of Safety, or for the promises of the Kingdom. Are we in God's Church, solely for the rewards? Do we endeavor to live as Christians simply for gain - or do we whole-heartedly believe that **God's way** is always right and best? Are we building the Godly character that would cause us to choose God's way - even if there were only seemingly intangible rewards in this temporal life? Here is the good news - there are great rewards, but our motivation must be:

"...to come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13)

When Jesus gave His life for us - He gave His all. Our calling is not an easy one - because God's way is not easy.

"For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow in His steps." (1Peter 2:21)

Paul reminds us brethren that **our faith** must be in God alone, *"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of **unbelief**, in departing from the living God."* (Hebrews 3:12)

How secure is our relationship with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ? How well do we trust in His unchangeable nature – in His love, in His trust-worthiness, in His providence, in His protection, in His sovereignty, in His holiness, in His mercy, and a whole multitude of other divine characteristics.

If **that faith** and full reliance is not **growing**, then we are actually in the process of departing from the living God. We are either, moving forward in our understanding and trust of God, or we are slipping back and putting our entrance into His Kingdom in danger.

Too many brethren in God's Church have a misplaced reliance on their **own faith**. An individual's misplaced reliance on inward faith might reveal itself with an, "I've got it made because of ...such and such" attitude. (fill in the blank)

And, we do not say it openly, but we think it inwardly – and it goes something like this: I've got it made because I keep the Sabbath on Saturday – My foundation is sure – because I know my Bible – I've got it made because I follow a man who would not steer me wrong – I've been in the church for ump-teen years – I've got it made! I'm with a real big group – I've got it made!

As we countdown to the return of Jesus Christ, let's realize that a final test of our conversion will be for the purpose of seeing if we will remain **faithful** for the duration. Remember how God wanted to know if Abraham was faithful in the case of his son Isaac. God makes no bones about how tough it really is!

*"...Be **faithful unto death** and I will give you the crown of life"* (Revelation 2:10).

For the people of God, there remains little doubt that there will be sore trials, severe tests, and great temptations in these last days. We do not whine about it! That is what we signed on for when we were baptized and counted the cost – whether or not we would be able to finish our course. We might say "I didn't realize that things would get this bad!"

Luke 14:26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sits not down first, and **counts the cost**, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

Luke 14:33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsakes not **all** that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:26 ... his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and **his own life also**, he cannot be my disciple.

We **counted the cost** and said that we would **die if need be**. We cannot go back on that vow.

Some brethren will succumb to Satan's devices and lose their salvation. People think, "I'm in God's Church," God will take care of me even if I do not measure up 100%. We think like that, because this is the day of "**Entitlement**." We believe we are entitled to **everything** – without even working for it. That is what the world has come to.

The truth is, some brethren will lose faith and succumb to Satan's devices and lose their salvation.

*"Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times **some shall depart from the faith**, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."* (1 Timothy 4:1)

The threat is indisputable. The question is: who among us will remain faithful in the face of such a severe ordeal? Many people start off strong when they first hear the message of the Kingdom of God, but are unable to remain faithful until the end.

"Many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:14)

That clearly means that many will not **hold fast** to their precious faith, as they should. It can happen to us – regrettably, it has come to pass for all too many already. We are told:

"Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap [salvation], if we faint not." (Galatians 6:9)

God's Word says that we will be presented holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable in His sight, **if** we continue in the **faith**. (Colossians 1:23)

Our faith must be in God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and not in ourselves.

*"...God is **faithful**, who will not allow you to be tested above that ye are able..."* (1 Corinthians 10:13)

People can start letting down, and they begin going back into their old habits, and they go back into their old weaknesses.

The next thing that you know, they forget the **big** picture. We are speaking about those who get offended, and ultimately perish, because they **let down** and they take their sights off God, and they forget where they were headed, and forget where the truth of God comes from. It is difficult, and we must fight, and strive, to enter into the Kingdom of God.

John 1:11 He [Jesus Christ] came unto His own [people], and His own received him not.

His own people should have known Him, should have loved Him, should have accepted Him, should have believed in Him, and should have embraced Him. The promises of God are attainable. God would not have called us in the first place – except He knew that we could make it into His Kingdom. Here is where you and I come in:

John 1:12 But as many as received Him...

That means that we do what Jesus Christ says. We forgive, where we should forgive. We sacrifice where opportunity presents itself. We recognize those opportunities where we are to lay our lives down. Jesus Christ said that we were to walk in His steps, and to do what He did. He laid His life down in sacrifice, and we are to do exactly the same. And here in verse :12 we come to the fulfillment of God's promise to us.

John 1:12 As many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God...

Those who will become the sons and daughters of God will receive Him, and receive His teachings. They will walk in His steps, believe Him, and have **faith** in Him as the Savior.

John 1:12c ...even to them that believe on His name. [Have Faith in God.]

Believe on His name, His reputation, His power, His philosophy, and His teachings – and live our lives accordingly. That is our sole purpose for existence!

John 1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of [the will of] God.

We exist because it is God's will that we be in His Kingdom as His sons and daughters! Do we believe it? That is our Faith! So when He is talking about us being born, you can think back to your Mother and Father and the day that you were born. That is not what He is talking about. We are talking about God's great Plan of being born into His Kingdom as eternal sons and daughters. That is why we are here. From the foundation of the world, before time began, God's Plan was to create us, so that we might be His sons and daughters.

We were born of the **Will of God**, and that is why we are here, and for no other reason. We cannot be offended and say, "I have had my feelings hurt, I have had my expectations dashed, and I have my standards, and I am not going to lower them. I am not going to sacrifice, I am not going to forgive, and I am not going to let it go."

We have to be **faithful** to God and His way, and what He calls us to do. And we all have a little something different to do.

1Corinthians 12:18 God has set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased Him.

That is why we do not compare ourselves to others.

2Corinthians 10:12 We dare not ...compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they... comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

And so the question arises, "Where are the true Christians **of faith** today?" God is looking for people who live their **faith**, who do not fall away, who do not get offended, and who do not get lost on the way to the Kingdom of God. Where are those Christians who are actually living their faith, so as to be in the First Resurrection and be in the Millennium with Jesus Christ?

Some will say, "I can go another way, and I can find somebody that says things that are **easy** to hear, or fun (Isaiah 30:10)."

Isaiah 30:10 Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits:

We cannot live like that. Where are the Christians **living their faith** so as to be in the First Resurrection, and to be in the Millennium with Jesus Christ? Do we think that because we were able to see what happened to Worldwide that we have passed the only test of true Christianity for our time? No!

Tests and trials come when we least expect them. Tests come when we do not know that it is coming. We don't get up in the morning and say, "I am going to have a wreck today," but sometimes we do. We don't get up in the morning saying, "My **faith** is going to be shattered today, and I am going to have it broken, and I am going to make choices that are going to take me out of the Kingdom of God."

The Gospel invitation went to a people who eventually rejected it. It happened to them, brethren, and it can happen to us. The Bible is full of warnings. God replaces those who refuse His offer. If we miss the mark, God finds someone else to take our crown (Revelation 3:11).

Revelation 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man **take thy crown**.

God finds a new convert to call into the Church if we refuse His offer. If you want to read a sobering Scripture, these are the words of Jesus Christ in the book of Matthew:

Matthew 8:12 But the children of the kingdom...

That is you, and that is me.

Matthew 8:12b ... shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

God is saying it does happen, it is possible, and it takes place. We must stay on our knees and draw near to God daily. Let us look at what Jesus Christ taught, His very words when He was on the earth, about the possibility of **being offended** and letting go and moving on, and going back to the world. None of those people were saying, I am going back into the world, and I am going back into sin. No, Satan is wiser than that. Satan gets us to take little baby steps away from where we are being fed, where we receive the truth, and where we know that God is working.

One last Warning:

2Peter 3:17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, **beware** lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

Let's close with:

2Timothy 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, **I have kept the faith:**

2Timothy 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

End: Will I Find Faith