

Remaining Steadfast

Norbert Bohnert—June 1, 2024

As we approach another Pentecost, I want to cover something that is especially important in our continuing walk with God, and our conversion process.

The events surrounding the Day of Pentecost, over 2000 years ago, provides clarity in our understanding of God's Plan for mankind. God created a body of believers to prepare the way for what He will do for the rest of mankind in the future.

Pentecost is a linking Holy Day for that reason. It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the Church of God in God's purpose for creating a family.

Acts 2:14: "Then Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and spoke out to them: 'Men, Jews, and all those of you who inhabit Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and pay attention to my words.'"

Peter was there telling them to pay attention to what he had to say:

Verse 15: "For these are not drunken as you suppose, for it is *only the* third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: (Joel 2:28) "'And it shall come to pass in the last days," says God, "*that* I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and even upon My servants and upon My handmaids will I pour out My Spirit in those days, and they shall prophesy; and I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and vapors of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before *the* coming of the great and awesome Day of *the* Lord. And it shall come to pass *that* everyone who calls upon the name of *the* Lord shall be saved'" (vs 15-21).

Here we see Peter addressing the multitudes that were gathered in Jerusalem as to the meaning of the wonders and miracles associated with God's pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon His people.

Peter was inspired to quote from Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17:"'And it shall come to pass in the last days,' says God, "*that* I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."

Peter quoted here from Joel 2 to describe the events surrounding the formation of the Church. This passage from Joel, as we understand, is

primarily a prophecy for the future, the last days. The 120 or so people at that time who could hardly be representative of all flesh. But it was the foretaste of that which would come upon the entire world.

We know the vast majority of mankind is still separated from God at this point, and still subject to the corruption and futility of this world and Satan. Not according to their own will, but according to God's will and His Plan for mankind.

Peter's use of Joel 2 at Pentecost indicates a connection, or linkage, to the future pouring out of God's Holy Spirit to all mankind. Pentecost is a foretaste of what will be available to all men in due time. As we know it, it works out in stages as each part of God's Plan unfolds.

What is the will of the Church? The Church is central to this process and it is hard to overstate the importance of the Church. In fact, it occupies a heavenly, Divine position in the Plan God as ordained for the salvation of all mankind.

In Heb.12, Paul discusses the Church's Divine position in the plan that God has ordained for the salvation of mankind.

Hebrews 12:22: "But you have come to Mount Zion, and to *the* city of *the* living God, heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels."

It is difficult in these days in which we live to grasp this verse and the profound impact the Church will have on mankind. Let us be honest, we are not particularly a great, large group of people at the present time. But the impact of God and of the Church on the entire world will be profound. By comparison, now we are weak, insignificant, and ignored.

That is not what God is doing in the larger scheme of things. God's saints have been redeemed early, as pictured by Peter's use of Joel 2, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, first on His Church, to be a transition to that time when it will be poured out on all creation.

The Church is a spiritual temple comprised of ordinary people, but they are set apart for a Holy purpose that God will deliver the whole creation through in due time.

I ask that we might revisit and reconsider what will happen in the future when God redeems the entire creation and the part we will play in it.

That is difficult for us to do, as we are still physical. We live in a physical world, and we are

subject to our own human frailties, sicknesses, inadequacies, and failures. Those will happen as human beings. This is the reason that through all of this *we must be people of faith, steadfast in our calling!*

God has called us out of the world, and that is the focus of this message today, *being steadfast in our calling* that God the Father has personally chosen each one of us.

What are we doing now to ensure that we are a part of the future fulfillment of Joel 2? *We have things we can do now to prepare for that time!* There is a process that God is going through, a process He uses to perfect His people—the Church—calling us now and those who have come before us.

James 1 is really the substance of my message today. There is a process here pictured by James. We can skip over this and read right through it, but I want to take some time and expand on it. Not once can we accuse James of being flowery or beating around the bush. He was direct, and he really goes right to the point after a brief reading in the first verse, which is the point of the entire book.

James 1:3: “Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.” *Very simple statement!*

This is the first part of the process’ it is the core. We engage ourselves in a work of faith. Faith is simple conceptually, but it has always been a problem for human beings to have.

We naturally walk by sight and through experience. We walk by what we do and experience in our lives. Faith is a spiritual quality that operates outside our physical senses. It is developed quietly through time, the little bit of what faith we have or are developing,

But its existence outside of the physical realm does not make it any less real. That is where I ask of you to have a bit of vision here. This faith I am speaking about is *a God-given faith*; this spiritual quality with the expectation and the intent that it will be assessed.

We can look to Abraham as the incredibly good example of someone who throughout his life was tested repeatedly to refine his faith. His final test was God asking him to sacrifice his only son to God. We, brethren, must look at that and be encouraged by that fact. There are times when what God requires us to do seems illogical and puzzling to our human minds. That is just the way it works.

Our faith will allow us to put these events and trials in perspective and move forward rather than being stagnant. We can take it for what it is and realize that our faith will be tested repeatedly. That is a fact and reality in our Christian lives. We have

all witnessed that in our personal lives as we have come to know the Truth.

The calling that God has given us has led us in the direction that we can have that faith that we require. Things going on in our lives or events occurring around us will always test our faith. For example, events occurring over the past 20 years have taken their toll on the Church and could, if we would allow it, weaken our resolve or even cause us to question God’s involvement in His Church.

We have seen a lot of things that have gone down in the past. Trials have come and have gone, and we certainly will continue to come, but this process is being used by God to test His people. Will we be in tune with God and allow Him to do it in our lives? *Let the Holy Spirit stir us up and guide and direct us in this process!*

We did not think it would take this long or be this difficult, did we? That has gone through my mind at various times, and I am sure it may have gone through your mind as well. But the proving of our faith is the process He is using to perfect us. So, no questions asked; Faith must be an absolute bedrock in our Christian lives.

Verse 4: “But let endurance have *its* perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, not lacking in anything.”

This clearly states what it is as the modern vernacular expression goes today. *It is what it is!* This is the process to perfection. Patience can sometimes also be made in reference to the word steadfastness, which means immovable, resolute, unchanging, and devoted.

The Greek wording would also indicate endurance, fortitude, and patient continuance. Steadfastness carries a more complete rendering of the spiritual quality James is referencing here in this verse.

Patience is not just the passage of time. Active patience, or steadfastness, is how we develop a resolute, determined commitment to a way of thinking and behavior learned and proven over the years. There is no question that we know what to do. The question becomes: **Are we willing to do it repeatedly?**

In our inner person, we know God’s Word is true, and it is a solid basis in our lives, even though we can stumble and we can fall to measure up over and over again.

That is the tendencies created by our human nature that we still possess, to come up short. Our natural human nature, which we must battle continually on a daily basis, and this world does not need to weaken our resolve. It should be founded on

a Rock of doing what God’s Word teaches us over and over again.

This passage of time, which can be very lengthy, many of us have been here for 30, 40, 50 years, and they can appreciate that far. But through that process, our faith becomes immovable and adamant so that the waves and the storms of life breaking against it cannot move us.

We know the waves will come. It’s inevitable. We have seen it many times, and we know they will come again. The tempest will come upon us. But if our faith is adamant and our steadfastness is sure, it will break on the adamant nature of our faith and not move us.

That is critical for us. This occurs because we have built upon the right foundation of God’s Truth and His desire for an intimate, close relationship with each one of us, and that close relationship with all His people. We know that through time we will be rewarded for this.

1-Corinthians 15:58: “So then, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in *the* Lord.”

We must be assured that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. We must understand and know that:

- God knows
- God remembers
- God will reward us in due time ***IF*** we are steadfast

Patience and steadfastness have their perfect work, because we remain actively engaged in the process over an extended period of time. It’s important for us to not forget this. *This is the process of conversion!*

We patiently continue to do what we know and have proven to be true, even after years and decades of wrestling with:

- our own nature
- facing trials
- hardships
- disappointment
- human failure

The pace of change in our lives can sometimes seem glacial. It can be slow. But that does not mean we give up. ***We must keep at it, brethren!***

We engage in that struggle, because we believe God, taking Him at His Word and looking for a crown of life that will be given to us—just as it was for Abraham in due time—at the end of our days.

We cannot emphasize this enough: The price is that we remain faithful through:

- the thick and thin
- the good and the bad
- the challenging

and remain devoted and resolute to our commitment we made upon our baptism!

It still applies now, and it will until our physical lives are no more. ***We are to be faithful to that fact!*** Success will come in this endeavor, ***which requires that we remain steadfast through everything that occurs in our physical lives!***

Paul talks about the benefits of all this; Hebrews 3:14: “For we are companions of Christ, if we truly hold the confidence *that we had* at the beginning steadfast until the end.”

The end being the absolute end of our lives, whatever that point will be. The road we are on is narrow, as we know, and it’s long and it’s difficult, but if we lift our eyes and see the vision in the future. Paul and James saw! We might spend less time focusing on the difficulties and our human shortcomings and failings, and more time on the power of God’s Holy Spirit.

Working out His purpose in the Church of the Firstborn. That is part of God’s Plan, and we cannot deny that, as we are a necessary part in God fulfilling this plan. Let us remember that! So, in conclusion James summarizes all this which I have spoken about.

James 1:12: “Blessed *is the* man who endures trials, because after he has been proved he shall receive a crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

This clearly summarizes all this that I have spoken about. As we approach another Pentecost and the significance of that day, let us be strengthened:

- by the calling we have been given
- by the blessings that we have been given by our Almighty God

Remember that our faith in our steadfastness is still important to fulfilling our role in our awesome journey toward the Kingdom of God

God is there for us; ***let us be there for God and His Word***, holding fast to what God has taught us and what we have learned through His Word.

Let us be immovable and steadfast in fulfilling our part, our role in God’s master plan. Let God and the Holy Spirit guide and direct us through our journey. God bless you all and have a very rewarding and inspiring rest of the Sabbath day.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Acts 2:14-21, 17
- 2) Joel 2:28
- 3) Hebrews 12:22
- 4) James 1: 3-4
- 5) 1 Corinthians 15:58
- 6) Hebrews 3:14
- 7) James 1:12

NB:bo/po
Transcribed: 6/5/24

Copyright 2024—All rights reserved. Except for brief excerpts for review purposes, no part of this publication may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means without the written permission of the copyright owner. This includes electronic and mechanical photocopying or recording, as well as the use of information storage and retrieval systems.