

## God's Workmanship (Part 4)

**Born Again**

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We are here today to observe this memorial of a profound and wonderful something that has not yet occurred. But I am sure that all of us who have any conception at all of what is going on in this world and in our lives as contrasted to what is coming when this memorial is realized, are looking forward to this time with a great deal of anticipation.

Matthew 19:28-29 Verily I say unto you, that you which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

What does it mean when Jesus says, "In the regeneration"? Regeneration is a very interesting word. It means "*new birth*," "*in the new birth*." It means "*to be born again*." It means *to be born a second time*. "Re" is a prefix that indicates *again*, or *once again*, and so regeneration means *to be generated*, *begun*, or *be born once again*. After having said that, I am going to tell you though that regeneration in this verse is being used in a much wider sense than that, much wider than merely being born again, because that is only one part of what will occur.

Acts 3:19-21 Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Christ is going to come, and the times of refreshing will come from His presence—the restitution or restoring of all things. Regeneration is a term referring to the return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection and rebirth of all who died in Christ, and the restoring of the government of God—the Kingdom of God—to this earth. That was the subject back here in Matthew 19. He was talking about all three of those things, the restitution of all things.

The general theme of my past three sermons fits right into the theme of this day because it represents a conclusion to what we are involved in in our lives. One of the subjects of the context here in Matthew 19 is *reward*. Reward is something given for efforts or works made in behalf of some enterprise.

In Matthew 19:27 we find a question that Peter asked that I am sure comes to our minds occasionally. We may not be thinking about it often, but nonetheless it is there, and maybe we have even asked it, expressed it. Maybe we have said it to God in prayer. We have certainly said it to one another. We think about it, wonder about it, and of course it was on the tip of the tongue of these men, because they asked this question following Jesus' conversation with the

rich young man who came to Him and said, "What must I do to have life, to inherit life?" And Jesus gave him something that he had to do, a work that he had to do, and of course the young man went away, and this left the apostles wondering, "What about us? We've already done something. We've already committed ourselves to working under Jesus Christ." So Peter said unto Him:

Matthew 19:27 Behold, we have forsaken all [That is a work that they did.] and followed You. [That is a work.] What shall we have therefore?

Jesus then answered the question in verses 28 and 29, which I will paraphrase here. He said, "In addition to this, you shall inherit everlasting life."

It is interesting the way He said it, using the term *inherit*, because inherit is something different from receiving reward. Inherit is something received—a gift in addition to what was earned, because it was earned by somebody else and that somebody else had the right to give it to whomsoever he willed. And so eternal life—everlasting life—is a gift. You cannot earn it by works.

So their question was: "What do I get for what I have given? What do I get for my works? What are they for?" Well, *reward* is one of those answers, and that reward will come in the *regeneration*. So Jesus makes it very clear that though God is very willing to reward us, that God is very willing to pay us for what we do, we are not to expect that we will be paid now. It is the regeneration that He points to.

We may receive blessings along the way, but we are to understand that we commit ourselves to Him in faith, not for what we can get out of Him now, but He says *Look forward*, and after we have performed the will of God we can expect that there will be something for what we have given. For right now reward is of minor importance in the overall scheme of things, because there are major hurdles that require a great deal of effort that have to be passed, even as the Israelites had hurdles to overcome in the wilderness.

As my last sermon was ending I was trying to impress upon us that the primary burden in this process that we call *salvation* is on God, and that this is a burden that He willingly and zealously accepts. He reveals His responsibility in quite a number of ways that are really as clear as a ray of sunshine on a cloudy day once we understand our relationship to Him in this process. So we have to adjust our perception of salvation as being a one-time occurrence, to that of being a process.

This is illustrated by Israel's freedom from bondage in and to Egypt. There is clearly a process shown, from God's calling, the preparation of Moses to be the human deliverer, the lawgiver, the mediator, until they finally took possession of their inheritance in Canaan. First of all, Moses was given a very thorough secular education, and then after he reached quite a pinnacle of power, he was humbled and prepared spiritually for forty years as a shepherd. That was quite a comedown for a man who might have been king, pharaoh. Once he was humbled, God sent him to announce His plan to confront the Egyptians, and to announce this thing to the Israelites as well.

After that began, God prepared Egypt to let Israel go. And then finally they were literally freed

from one aspect of their bondage. God then spent forty years, through a wide variety of experiences through the wilderness, preparing them for possession of their inheritance. In the analogy, they were finally saved upon entrance into their inheritance, but all along the way they were being saved from one difficulty after another and being worked on to prepare them for receiving their inheritance.

Salvation for Moses can easily be considered to have been a 120 years-long process. For others, a shorter period, but still a process that had a beginning, a middle, and an end. Now for us, we call the beginning our calling and justification. The middle is sanctification and holiness, and this occupies the greatest length of time. The ending is glorification—an entrance into our inheritance. So it was entirely practical and truthful for the apostles to write of salvation as being in the past, in the perfect, in the present, and in the future tenses, because each of them is in reality correct. However, in the everyday rush, in the pressure of living life, that is something that we tend to lose sight of, and many times we get discouraged, thinking we will not make it successfully to the resurrection.

Turn with me to a very encouraging section of scriptures in Romans 8. Will we make it? Are we saved now? The answer to that brethren, is yes—if we continue. Many Israelites did not continue.

Romans 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Are we going to make it? Who can be against us? Who can stop us? Who can trip us up? Who can block the way? Who can withstand God?

Romans 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

What do you need to make it? Do you need faith? Do you need love? What kind of a gift do you need? Do you need to be able to remember better? What will God withhold? Will God give us the starch that we need for our backbones? He will, but He will give it, whatever gift it is, in the measure that is needful for you so that you know that you participated in it too. It will be just enough to make us work awfully hard, a test of our commitment, a test of our faith. But I know that the closer we get to our spiritual Canaan, the more we are going to realize, the more clearly we are going to see that without what God added, we never would have made it. And yet the part that we did was difficult for us.

Romans 8:33-34 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died. [The condemnation has been lifted.] Yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Do you need somebody to plead your case before God? God provided that too. He is up there pleading, interceding for us.

Romans 8:35, 37-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than overcomers [conquerors.] through him that loved us. For I am

persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels [meaning demons], nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Brethren, look how confidently Paul wrote this, and remember, this is God's Word, through the apostle Paul. God Himself is confident that He can get us there.

God has written in this manner so that we can be encouraged, knowing that the primary burden is on Him, and thus we can give our full attention to the small part that we play. That is our works in this awesome purpose being worked out, and therefore the reason that He wrote of salvation in the way that He did, in the past, perfect, present, and future, to provide incentive for us to yield ourselves to His creative efforts.

It is our efforts in yielding to Him—motivated and empowered by means of His Spirit—that God defines as *good works*; not for salvation, but for other reasons entirely. If the Israelites had not walked, would they have ever made it? It seems like such a dumb question, but yet it was such a tiny part of getting them there. Who supplied them with manna everyday? They did not have farms out there to grow food. Who supplied them with water? In one place, it is called *the fiery desert*. God supplied them with manna and with water. Who put the cloud over their heads to protect them from the worst of the weather? God did. Who kept their shoes from wearing out? God did. Who supplied them with protection from their enemy's armies? God did. They did a little bit. They walked. God did everything else.

Who can stand in His way? Well brethren, only you. That is the scary part of it. But you see, if we keep close to God, even we will not stand in His way, because that is what He wants us to do. So *good works* as God reveals them are something that is not even possible until we are being led by His Spirit. It has to be this way because we are created unto good works. The good works are a product of the relationship with God, and they do not even begin until He calls us, reveals Himself, begins to show us the way, and we begin to move along it. If this is not true, then the good that we do before God's calling would place God in our debt, and He would be calling us because of debt, and this would place us into His spiritual image even before the process begins. This cannot possibly be true, because of the following. There is more than one, but I am just going to read this one.

Ephesians 2:2 Wherein in time past [before our calling] you walked [lived your life] according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.

That means brethren, in short, that when we were called, we were in the image of Satan the Devil. So we were not called because of our good works. The good works do not even begin until God calls us. This puts works into an entirely different configuration. Their purpose is not to save us, but to write the law of God—the Word of God, the way of God, the instruction of God—in our hearts. And this is something that God in His wisdom has determined must be done by the experience of living in them as a way of life led by His Spirit.

In other words, book knowledge, academic information, will not cut it with God. It is a good start. It is actually living it by God's Spirit that impresses the image of God on us, even as

living according to the prince of the power of the air impressed Satan's image on us.

The first and most important purpose for works as far as God is concerned, is for godly character building and preparation for His Kingdom. The image will *not* be impressed upon us through intellectual knowledge. It has to be *lived!*

The second and third reason for works are very closely related. The second one is *to give proof of our faith.*

James 2:14 What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he has faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?

It becomes very obvious that James is writing here of a specific kind of faith. This is why I can say so confidently that intellectual knowledge of God will not cut it, because the kind of faith that will not save a person is simply an intellectual knowledge of God that professes that they believe. I will prove that to you in just a second.

James 2:17 Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead.

A dead faith will not save anybody. You have to have a living faith, and a living faith will work. A dead faith may profess. A dead faith may know intellectually, but a living faith knows by experience because it has put God to the test and found that it is true. And because it has put God's way to the test and is living it, it is becoming engrained in the character as a part of the very nature of the person.

James 2:24 You see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

James very clearly sees two kinds of faith. One is a faith that professes, but it is a dead faith. The other faith is a faith that trusts and acts, and so is a faith that manifests itself in post-conversion works. You can see an illustration of that in verses 15 and 16. And so a faith that saves is never alone. It will work.

That is the second reason for works. It is to show God that we believe actively. It is not merely intellectual. We are using it in our lives. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and God wants to see action.

The third reason is to witness to the world that our God is God. We are going to go to Isaiah 43. God is speaking.

Isaiah 43:9 Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth.

What we see here is in the form of a court trial, and God is calling people to witness of their God. In verse 10 God turns to the Israelites and He says to them:

Isaiah 43:10 You are my witnesses, says the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen; that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am He.

He is God, and He is the One who is able to tell the end from the beginning, and He says:

Isaiah 43:10-13 Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no savior. I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore you [Israelites] are my witnesses, says the LORD, that I am God. Yes, before the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall stop it?

We are to witness by our works before this world and before God that our God is God. You see a progression here. Works are for character building. Works are for witnessing. If we are working on the very first thing, working on building character, working on building becoming in the image of God, working on imitating God, then the other parts of it begin to fall into place. The witness is made because we are working on ourselves, the witness that our God is God, because this is the reason why we are changing. At the same time we are giving God evidence, proof, that we really do believe Him. It is not just a convenient and heartwarming thing, a thought that we carry around in our minds. But we put that belief to work.

The fourth reason is closely tied to the previous three, and that is that these works will glorify God. I think you are pleased when your children represent your family well, and this is what God wants from us too. He wants us to bring honor to the family. He wants us to bring honor to Him. He wants to be able to say confidently and truthfully, "Look at my son, or my daughter, in whom I am well pleased." I do not think that He would say that about somebody who bears His name and yet is dishonoring Him in every area.

I Corinthians 6:19 What? Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own?

He has just provided a legal basis for the instruction that he is going to give—the command.

I Corinthians 6:20 For you are bought with a price: [Here is our obligation, our duty to God] Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

We are honor-bound to work to bring honor to Him, because we are His slaves. He redeemed us through Jesus Christ, paid the price for us, and we are under obligation to bring glory to Him. But brethren, He has honored us in what He has done. There are so many others out there in this world who put us to shame. God has called the weak and the lowly and the base of the world and given us the opportunity to bear His name. There are not many people on earth who bear the family name *God*. Think about it.

To this end, because He lives in us, we are sacred, and we are to guard the sanctity of our bodies, our minds from defilement and the destruction of sin, and are duty-bound to honor God, to glorify Him, to bring praise to Him with our entire personality by doing good works. Brethren, these are the reasons why Mr. Armstrong said that works will not save, but only those who work will be saved, because they are building character, they are giving witness to God that they really do believe Him, they are witnessing to the world, and they are bringing honor and praise to His name. And so works absolutely cannot earn salvation, but everyone who is truly led by God's Spirit will, out of the sheer force of God's creative powers and faith in Him and love for Him, bend every effort to yield to Him, thus overcoming the pull to remain in this world and in the image of Satan the Devil.

The fifth reason is the one we began with, and that is *reward*. It is based on things that we do in the body. Let me show you an interesting scripture back in Matthew 5, right at the very beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. I bet you did not remember that Jesus mentioned reward right in the Beattitudes.

Matthew 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

There are two things here. One is the fact that this appears at the end of the Beattitudes, thus indicating that having these beautiful attitudes is at least partially associated with being under our control. In other words, He starts off with humility. That is under our control. As you know, being humble is a choice. And the same with the others as well, and that they are considered being a work, and these beautiful attitudes are the result of conscious choices made to submit to God's rule in our lives and *this way*. The second thing is that we should not expect rewards until the resurrection. They are being held in reserve until the return of Christ. I think brethren, to give them sooner would diminish our voluntarily giving ourselves wholeheartedly to God.

I Corinthians 3:11-13 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation [Here we have works.] gold, silver, precious stones [representing quality of them], wood, hay, stubble [also qualities, but lower qualities]; Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it. . . .

Meaning the day of trial. It is one reason why we have trials, so that the quality of our work can be tested.

I Corinthians 3:13-15. . . .because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Even that is encouraging. Even if our work is not good as it could or should be, God in His mercy still saves us.

Let me give you a summary.

Salvation is written of in a variety of tenses clearly to show that it is a process. What God wants us to understand is that we are delivered from more than death. Salvation is the whole creative process, and salvation is at one and the same time both instantaneous through justification, and gradual through sanctification, requiring our time and experience in living His way till glorification.

Salvation is not merely immunity from death. Salvation is what we become. It is a change so in our nature, so radical that it parallels a resurrection. Salvation is the creation of the *new man* in us. Brethren, we are being saved from what we are! Think about that. We are being saved from what we are!

Good works provide a major aspect in writing God's way in our hearts, thus working us toward His image, creating character, witnessing of Him, and glorifying Him.

Works are the basis of future reward.

That being said, there is yet another reason, a sixth reason as to why things of this sort are written in the manner that they are—past, perfect, present, future. It is the foundation of all the others, and the most important one of all. I alluded to this earlier when I said *Look at the confidence that rings forth from God's declaration of what He will do*, and so we spent some time in Romans 8, beginning right around verse 31. There are many other places where God gives a ringing declaration of how confident He is that He can bring us into our inheritance. What we are going to do now is establish a biblical principle for understanding the way these events that have not yet occurred are written, and why they are written in the way that they are.

II Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ.

Look at the confidence that is there. "Thanks be to God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ." Was Paul confident that God could save us? Was Paul confident that salvation was already in his grasp?

II Corinthians 2:14-16 Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ, and makes manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For [Now here is why.] For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

God is. God is sufficient. This is written in the present passive tense. It means, and this is really interesting, that what Paul is writing about is occurring at this very moment. It is happening right now. It is in process of occurring. The picture behind what is written here is derived from the practice of Roman generals who marched in victory in Rome after a battle, with an entourage of prisoners, and those prisoners consisted of two groups—those who are saved, and those that perish.

If we translated that properly, since it is in process, I more correctly would have said *those who are being saved, and those who are perishing*. Those who are being saved refers to those allowed to live as slaves of the empire. Perhaps you have seen this in movies, of the Roman general marching back with his soldiers and marching back with the captives going through Rome, and they customarily divided the captives into two groups. Apparently they had the Roman general, or whomever he appointed, look over the captives and say "Save this one, save this one. Save this one. Kill this one. Kill that one. Save this one. Kill this one."

But before they killed them, (and many times the killing was done by crucifixion) they marched them through the city of Rome, and so the ones that were going to be killed were on their way to perishing. However, the ones that had been chosen to live were on their way to a life of slavery, but they were still living, and they were going to be allowed to live.

This is happening to you right now! You have been chosen by our General Jesus Christ, to be among those who will live as slaves; but you will be saved. You are being saved. You are His captive just assuredly as the others are His captives, but you have been set aside and you are

on your way to eternal life. Now what you can see is present passive tense. This is God's Word, not Paul's really. It is God's. God has neatly divided the world into two categories: those who are saved, and those who are perishing. Those who are being saved; those who are perishing. A very neat division.

Let us not forget Christ. It says in verse 14: *He causes us to triumph in Christ*. Do you see how much confidence God has? He always causes us to triumph in Christ. In other words, God is showing Christ as already victorious. He has already won the battle! Again, think of that in terms of salvation. So, He is already victorious in behalf of those who are saved.

Why does God do this? Why does He write things this way? Well the answer contains two reasons, and one is because He is absolutely certain that He can meet His commitments that He made to Abraham to bring us into His Kingdom. The other again is to provide incentive to us to meet the conditions of the covenant that we made with God at baptism—that we would submit to Him by living faith so that His image can be written in our hearts.

Let us go back to Hebrews 10. I want to look at a scripture that Richard used this morning, and I just want to emphasize it in a little bit different manner. Look at this instruction in the light of what we just saw there in II Corinthians, that Christ has already won His part of the battle, and God is absolutely confident that He can cause us to triumph. It may be a long drag-out fight before we finally do triumph, but He is confident that He can work us around by His creative efforts, by His creative power, by His Spirit, giving us the gifts that we need, encouraging us, chastening us, instructing us, doing whatever is necessary. Now here comes our instruction:

Hebrews 10:35-38 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward. For you have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise, for yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

I want to look at this statement just briefly: "Now the just shall live by faith." That statement is a statement of fact. The just *will* live by faith. That statement is also a command. *You will live by faith*. That is the condition that we have to meet. If we do not meet this condition, we will not submit. If we do not submit, we will not be in the resurrection.

What we are getting at here is really the foundation, the basis of our works. It is *faith*. God has written things the way He has in order to motivate our faith. On the one hand, to give us confidence in Him, and on the other hand, so that we recognize the importance of faith and make the effort to bend our lives according to it.

Now let us consider. Is there anything that is too hard for the Lord? Remember the ringing confidence—*I will do it*, is basically what He said. *I will bring you into the land*. How would you like to follow somebody that really was not sure? "Well, maybe we can make it, unless the Philistines get in our way", or "Maybe if it rains real hard we're going to have a hard time." You would not want to follow somebody like that, would you? You want a captain, you want a general who knows his business and knows that he can do it.

Now, is anything too hard for the Lord? This was a statement made by God Himself to Sarah

after she tee-heed in the tent because she did not believe what God said in regard that in her old age she would be able to bring forth a son out of her own body. So she doubted Him. God's response was, "You did laugh. Is anything too hard for Me?" Well, the answer of course to that is *no*. We have to consider this principle behind the question that He asked of Sarah, because the principle behind the question is something we need to consider because living faith cannot exist on empty words and hollow claims. Either God does what He says, or He cannot be trusted. Either we believe what God shows that He has done, or we will not submit, and we will not be in His Kingdom either.

Turn to Romans 4. Remember what it said back there in Isaiah 43. God claims that He is unique because He is able to tell the end from the beginning. He is able to tell the future and bring it to pass. The word that goes out of His mouth, He fulfills. Now Paul draws upon that, and in verse 17 it says:

Romans 4:17 (As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations) before him [Abraham] whom he believed, even God, who quickens the dead, and calls those things which be not as though they were.

So confident is God that He calls things that are not yet accomplished as though they were already a reality. Thus we are already in the Kingdom of God. That is what we are dealing with here. In Hebrews 11:1 we will pick something up in regard to faith.

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

Faith is the substance of things hoped for. We hope for the resurrection of the dead. We hope for the time when we will live as God lives. We hope for the time when we will be no more burdened by human nature. We hope for the time when we will be in His image. We hope for the time when we will not be living under the fear and pain of death. There is much more, and these are wonderful things, but they must rest on, or they must have their validity in something. They must have a foundation, and that foundation is faith. It is in what God says.

This verse says that faith is the substance. Substance means *faith is what stands under; sub*, meaning *under; stance, stands*. Faith stands under. It is the foundation, it is the support of the things that we hope for, and the things that we hope for are the things that God has promised to us.

But let me take this one step further. That faith being spoken of here in Hebrews 11, that faith itself must have something supporting it, something that is so firm, something that is irresistible and cannot be destroyed. Do you know what that is? It is God's faithfulness. Our hope rests upon God's faithfulness. If He is not faithful to His Word, if He does not do what He says, if He lies, if He twists things, how can we trust Him if He says, and then does not do? But because He is faithful, because it is impossible for Him to lie, everything that goes out of His mind is absolutely pure, and it can be trusted, it can be leaned upon. It will not give way. Now do you believe it, because without that assurance, we cannot have faith.

Let us trace this a little bit. Our faith rests in God's faithfulness, His character, and His power. Without these things we have no basis for having hope.

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you: And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you: and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed.

This is what Abraham believed, and this is what God is being faithful to in regard to us in regard to salvation. It is His promise to Abraham. What we have here is the original promise.

Genesis 13:14-16 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed forever. And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall your seed also be numbered.

That is the same promise, a little bit added to it, and God kept adding to it. Each time that He said it, He added a little bit more detail. He repeated it to Isaac, then to Jacob, adding more detail each time. Our calling to make us a part of Abraham's seed has already been fulfilled, and thus He has been faithful to the fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—in that part of it. But now He must continue that faithfulness to them and add faithfulness to us by saving us; that is, by completing our salvation in order that the promise be completely fulfilled. This has to be done, because the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob involves everlasting life.

Genesis 13:15 For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed forever.

Genesis 17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto you, and to your seed after you.

The *everlasting* covenant part cannot be the Old Covenant, because it was never intended to be everlasting, and at this moment it is fading away, according to Hebrews 8:13. So there must be everlasting life to accommodate everlasting possession of the land. In Romans 11:26-29 He showed that the promise will be kept, and the salvation being spoken of there is the same salvation that we are involved in, except that it comes in the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment period. God is faithful, and He is thinking way ahead of time.

Romans 11:26, 29 And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. . . . For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

Read Isaiah 59:20-21 and Isaiah 60:1 and 21. They describe millennial conditions, but they also show that after the resurrection Israel shall inherit the land forever. Jeremiah 31:31-37 show us the same thing.

I am giving you these verses because I want you to see how confident God is that He can bring what He is saying to pass. In His mind's eye, in His mind, your salvation is already assured. It is His confidence in Himself to bring you into the land, and is a major cause for these things being written in the past tense, and in the perfect tense, because He is so confident that He can do it.

He wants you to believe that, to carry with you that same kind of confidence in Him, in His faithfulness, so that you can live a life that is free from the kind of worries that we would normally have in leadership, because our leaders on earth normally do not fulfill their promises; but God does.

Now I can show you how God established a pattern with the Israelites. Again Exodus 6: 6-8. This is the place where He said *I will* seven times. That was the promise that He made to them.

Exodus 6:6-8 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, which brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD.

And so the question for Israel then, (and that remains for us today) is, *Will He be faithful? Can He be trusted?* Deuteronomy 1: 31 was written in the last month before they went into the land, and God said, "I did it. I kept My word. I was faithful to the promise that I made to you." He got them into the land.

Deuteronomy 1:31 And in the wilderness, where you have seen how that the Lord your God bore you, as a man does bear his son, in all the way that you went, until you came into this place.

That was the answer to Israel of His promise, and it should be the answer for us. Remember, that is the number one pattern for us. And they made it.

Let us look at an interesting one in Malachi 3. I will tell you, you can thank Him for His faithfulness when you understand this verse. You might recall that last Sabbath Darryl said that Malachi is an end-time book, and it is. Now consider this end-time book written to you!

Malachi 3:6 For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Do you see what He is saying there? He is saying to the church, "I've got the goods on you, and if it were not for the fact that I am faithful to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you would be burned up. But because I am the faithful God, you repent, I'm going to forgive you and bring you into the land." I will tell you, that one is hair-raising once you understand that it is written to the church, because people are not tithing, or they are playing with the tithing laws.

He makes it very clear in Deuteronomy 7 that the reason He called us is because He is faithful. There are all kinds of things all through His Word to show us there is good reason for us to have faith.

Deuteronomy 7:6-9 For you are an holy people unto the LORD your God: the LORD your God has chosen you to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all

people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, has the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God, he is God, the faithful God, which keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

I will tell you, these next verses, are so encouraging to me.

Isaiah 46:1-2 Bel bows down, and Nebo stoops, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle; your carriages were heavy laden: they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.

This is a prophecy against Babylon. Bel and Nebo were the major gods of Babylon. God is showing that He is superior to the gods of Babylon, because Bel is now bowing down to God, and Nebo is stooping, groveling in the dust before the God of the Bible. So God is turning to Israel—to you and me—and He is saying, "Look. Look at what happened. Their gods could not deliver them, and now Babylon is gone into captivity." And so He says:

Isaiah 46:3-4 Listen unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs [gray heads] will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.

Can we bank on that? Brethren, there is no better investment that you could possibly make in your life, than to bet your life, as it were, on the faithfulness of God. He said that He is going to carry us all the way into the Kingdom. That ought to be encouraging. And so He goes on to extol Himself as being unique.

Isaiah 46:5 To whom will you liken me, and make me equal, and compare, that we may be like?

What politician can deliver on his promises? What national leader has the character that is anything like Mine? Who is it that tells you things and never lies? Who is it that always delivers on His Word? Who is it that is anywhere near being like Me?

God is unique. He can be relied upon. Our faith is in His faithfulness. It is in His character and in His power, and those three together make a powerful reason for being a foundation for our believing in living faith and doing those things necessary and right that fall within the framework of good works.

Everybody knows that Isaiah 11 is a description of millennial conditions, but there is an interesting description of God in there.

Isaiah 11:4-5 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle

of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

It is almost like these things which go around the middle of a person's body, and He is saying, "This is what holds Me together. This is what makes Me, as it were, what I am—faithfulness and righteousness." He always does things right, and He is faithful. In Psalm 36: 5 it says that His faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

Psalm 36:5 Your mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and your faithfulness reaches unto the clouds.

Let us go back to I Timothy 4 to the instructions to the young evangelist Timothy.

I Timothy 4:9-10 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For therefore we both labor and suffer [we work and suffer] reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe.

It is kind of a misleading statement the way that the *King James* translated that. It is better translated this way. Paul says:

God has provided salvation for all mankind. Of course we understand that it is each in his own order, and right now is our time for salvation. It is a day of salvation. So God has provided salvation for all mankind, but only to those who believe.

That is the condition that we have to meet, and it cannot be only an intellectual belief. Just like Martin (Collins) was saying about that man that he knew before, who could quote long portions of the Bible. I once read a "*Ripley's Believe It or Not*" many, many years ago, and I do not know whether this is true, but it was in "*Believe It or Not*." There was a man who was a fisherman, and he was an American. While he was out fishing he would be reading the Bible constantly when he was not tending his lines or nets or whatever it was, and in the process of time, after doing this for decades, that man knew the words of the Bible so well you could quote to him the beginning of any verse anywhere in the Bible, and he would pick right up and recite the entire Bible after that. To the best of my knowledge that man was never saved. He just made use of the magnificent brain that God has given to us.

What God is looking for is living faith that works. It works because it believes. It is that simple. It is not easy to do, but He already sees us as triumphing in Christ. So God has provided salvation for all of mankind, but only to those who believe.

Lamentations 3:22 It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is your faithfulness.

Brethren, if we can trust in His faithfulness, then we can look forward in confidence in the same way Paul did as though salvation is already accomplished.