

Are We Living By Faith or By Reason?

(Go To Meeting)

Norbert Bohnert—July 7, 2023

Today, brethren, I'm going to talk about a subject that's come to the forefront many, many times over our experience in the Churches of God. I think we can all relate to this subject to one extent or another. As a way of introduction, *a parable*:

Luke 18:1: "And He also spoke a parable to them to show that it is necessary **to pray always, and not to give up**, saying, "There was in a certain city a certain judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city; and she kept coming to him, saying, "Avenge me of my adversary." Now, for a time he would not; but afterwards he said within himself, "Although I do not fear God and do not respect man, yet, because this widow is causing me trouble, I will avenge her..." (vs 1-5).

The purpose of this parable is that we don't lose heart! That we don't give up! That we stay close to God through prayer so that we won't fail to endure to the end.

Have you ever reached a point in your life that you wanted to give up? *I'll leave that question for you to answer, personally!*

This widow did not give up. She was very persistent in her petitions of this unjust judge that she was before. She did it to get relief from her adversary. We don't know what the adversary was, but obviously, she was being mistreated in some way, somehow in her life.

But because she wouldn't give up in going to the authorities, her persistent eventually was rewarded. You may wonder what this has to do with the message that I'm giving you. Just be patient and we will see the significance of this story that I'm trying to convey to you.

As I said, the impression that we're given is that the average person wouldn't have persisted through the prolonged trial that she endured. I think that is part of Christ's message also to us. The undercurrent is that we need to endure through our trials and not just give in and give up.

Verse 6: "Then the Lord said, 'Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And shall not God execute vengeance for His elect, who cry out to Him day and night, and patiently watch over them? I tell you that He will execute vengeance for them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, shall He find the *true* faith on the earth?'" (vs 6-8).

Shall Christ find true faith on the earth at that time. Christ is encouraging us all from that point on for them to reason their way throughout this parable. The character of that unjust judge was that he was defined as one who did not fear God.

He had no real regard for God and no real regard for man. He really didn't care about his fellow man in any measurable way. But he was capable of finally intervening for this poor widow **because of her perseverance!** Because she was always asking for intervention, she did not give up.

How much more certain is God's intervention for His people, even though He allows trials to persist in our lives, that go on and on in some occasions. Sometimes protracted that they go on for years, and even decades as we pray constantly for help.

The reasoning here is that there's no danger of God being unfaithful! We know that! There's no danger of God being unfaithful! That's not something we have to be concerned about at any time. **The danger is in the faith of the elect**, you and I. That's the concern of this parable that we have just read. Will the called out ones and truly trust God in every prolonged trial that comes along our way?

We know that many trials that we have personally gone through in our lives, we've all experienced trials—many severe, many not so severe—and as we have gone through these trials some help has come our way if we continually go back to God and pray and seek His help.

There again, it takes faith. God does not immediately answer our prayers. That faith that we have to hold onto is so critical in our conversion process. We look at the world today that we live in, and it's in total chaos and turmoil. Many, many things happen around us. There can be violence toward us, or unjust judgments toward us, as this elderly lady had.

- we can be surrounded by immorality all around us
- we can be hungry and thirsty
- we can be sick
- we can face persecution in the time that we're living in

Many have experienced that in one form or the other. We know also that we can face death. That is reality.

- Will we stay close to God regardless?

- Will we trust Him to the very end?

Those are the questions we must really, each one of us personally, answer.

First, He does not want us to fail! We also know that! Christ does not want any of us to fail! Just like we don't want our children to fail as they grow up. We want to do everything we can to help and assist them along their path so that they can make good choices in life. ‘

That they can continue to look to God and find the answers as they need to as they mature in life. That is how God is for us, as well. He does not one of us to ever fail.

Secondly, the history He inspired to be preserved for us in the Scriptures reveals very clearly that Israel failed for unbelief. We see that in Heb. 3. They were God's chosen people, and today the Church is spiritual Israel. We are faced with some of the very same trials that physical Israel was faced with before us.

Christ spoke very seriously in v 8 when He asked the question: *Will I really find faith on the earth!* He said that for our sake, for the sake of the elect. Those on whom judgment has come. That would be within the Church of God today.

It was, and is, a pivotal concern between life and death. Faith is a concern that we should really concentrate on. There isn't one of us that can't name various individuals over the decades—or in recent times—who have succumbed to some of the distractions out there in this world. Some of the methods—the many methods—of compromise that Satan puts in our way, who have left the faith.

Sadly, it's reality! It has occurred and we must continually strive to fight that off. There are all kinds of distractions, as we all know, that get in the way. If we let them, they cause us to question:

- What is it that we really believe?
- Have we ever come to that point?
- What is it that we really believe?

As the world around us continues to erode, faith in God, belief in God is unfortunately eroding with it. It will have its impact on us if we allow it to. That means one thing for sure, ***our faith is being tried and tested and without it we will not endure to the end!***

We must have total confidence in God, and that, of course, is what our adversary hopes for, that we won't endure to the end. We are fighting a battle, each one of us, to one extent or the other.

Satan started mankind out on an unbelieving course. We know the account in Gen. 3 very well. There Satan struck up a conversation with Eve. He asked, ‘What has God told you about eating from the trees of the garden?’ Eve was very quick to reply! She told Satan what she and Adam had learned from God about what they could and couldn't do as far as the trees were concerned.

So, we initially know that Adam and Eve believed God. The fact that they hadn't sinned up to that point indicates a faith toward God. They believed what He said and they did what He said. That's basically the crux: belief and to actually do what the Lord says.

But that all changed when Satan began his reasoning process with Eve and he said,

You're not going to die, don't worry about it. You're not going to die, but you will become wiser if you eat of that one particular tree. You will come to know good and evil just like God does!

Very manipulative!

Do to his clever approach, Eve suddenly saw many good and desirable benefits to disobeying God. *Satan had deceived her* and suddenly the whole world was changed for her. Just like that, *her faith in God was gone!*

Through Satan's subtle approach, which he uses so many times very subtly, he appealed to Eve's intellectual vanity, which had the same effect on Adam. All Satan had to do was pit carnal, human reason against *faith!*

That is what we are also battling on a daily basis. That's where I'm going with this message. The interesting thing here is that in their mind they were willingly taken captive by ‘the god of this world.’

They were totally unaware through the reasoning process that was going on. They were willingly led by carnal human reasoning. They lost their focus. Ever since the garden, the mind of humanity have been held captive and willingly so! In fact, what we struggle with today, even with the edition of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we have the same thing to overcome.

When we look at the world today, what has all the carnal, human reasoning produced? *It hasn't produced the loving, stable environment that we live in, which none of us would say is a loving, stable environment!* We become comfortable, and it seems unthinkable that humanity has willingly excepted what we see in the world today, ***or what could have been—literally a utopian lifestyle under the loving***

authority of God! It could have been wonderful! Such is the power of carnal reasoning in the destruction that has occurred!

What we need to fully immerse our mind on is the fact that God wants to bless all of His people. He wants to bless all people who will listen!

Deuteronomy 28:1: “And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD your God to observe *and* to do all His commandments, which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you on high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you **if you will obey the voice of the LORD your God**” (vs 1-2).

Diligent belief in God, because we believe Him in living faith! That’s what living faith looks like. We show our faith by our works, what we do. We do it because:

- we believe it
- we’re convicted
- we’re committed

And God promises what it is that all people want! What do we want?

Verse 3: Blessed *shall you be* in the city, and blessed *shall you be* in the field. Blessed *shall be* the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your livestock, the increase of your cattle, and the flocks of your sheep. Blessed *shall be* your basket and your store. Blessed *shall you be* when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. The LORD shall cause your enemies that rise up against you to be stricken before your face. They shall come out against you one way, and flee before you seven ways” (vs 3-7).

All of these are wonderful blessings that God has promised to Israel for faithful obedience. ***The reality is***—and this is because we live in a world that hates God that contrary to Satan’s reasoning—***God is looking for opportunities to bless us!*** He’s looking of or opportunities to improve our lives and make things better through faith. Through faith God can give blessings!

It is a choice between faith and reason. When I say for us, I’m talking about those who are under judgment now. Meaning the called out ones! Those in the Churches of God today, those who have received the Holy Spirit. We are under judgment! We have this choice: *faith or carnal, human reasoning!*

Deuteronomy 30:11: “For this commandment, which I command you today *is* not hidden from you, neither is it far off.”

The commandment was ***to believe God and obey Him!*** That’s not a mysterious thing! It’s not a hard thing to grasp. It’s very simple: ***to believe God and to obey Him and His Word!***

Verse 12: “It *is* not in heaven *that you should* say, ‘Who shall go up to heaven for us, and bring it to us, so that we may hear it and do it?’ Neither *is* it beyond the sea *that you should* say, ‘Who shall go over the sea for us to bring it to us, so that we may hear it and do it?’ But the Word *is* very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, so that you may do it” (vs 12-14).

It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can have this. No one in Israel could plead ignorance in Moses’ time, and more that Adam and Eve, they were instructed by God, or those of us in God’s Church today, is what God actually desires in us.

Jesus desires for us to have to good life! It’s not been a mystery from the beginning. He’s provided that for us, the opportunity that we could have a good life.

Verse 15: “Behold, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil,”

Based on what we’ve read, Moses was inspired to bring it down to the most simplistic of terms. First, believe and live by what God commands, and have a good life. Very simple principle. The alternative is to follow our own carnal, human reasoning that will yield evil over time.

It make take a little bit of time to get corrupted enough to where it happens, and unfortunately, if it gets bad enough, it could ultimately bring death.

For us it really is a ‘no brainer.’ Why would anyone want to choose death? Why would the whole world choose captivity and death ***to*** freedom and life? There is an answer to this question. It is because human carnal nature and reasoning destroys man’s faith.

We can look at the entire history of Israel in what we see; it all came down to faith! That’s what we read of in Heb.3 by Paul, that there are only two choices: there’s either life, or there’s death, which we can say are synonyms for the give and the get way of life that we’ve heard within the Church for generations.

We have been taught that. I’ve heard that from the time that I was a child. My parents taught me that. Life for one of God’s people is not a blend of the two. It’s not like fabric that comes partly cotton or rayon or whatever fabric they mix it with.

The good life is a singular category.

Deuteronomy 28:14: “And you shall not go aside from any of the words, which I command you today, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.”

In other words, we are to follow God straight and true. Not be distracted or go sideways. Not let our human reasoning get in the way. Again, none of this is a complicated thing. It’s very simple concept! The reason that we are to do it that way is because it will lead to life and not to death.

Life, the good and real life that God wants isn’t 80% faith and 20% reason. *That’s not the way it works!* Real life is 100% living active faith! Total trust in God and His Word. But remember, as always, it is a choice. That’s the choice that God gives each one of us. He puts it in front of us.

Brethren, let’s define two terms here, and we will begin with:

1. Reason

There can be Godly reason that can lead to a faithful conclusion such as Christ’s parable that we read earlier. We have to have reason to believe. Paul reasoned this way wherever he went, and so do we today, especially on the Sabbath Day and the Holy Days.

We reason totally from the Scriptures. We talk about what God says about life and what He has instructed us through His Word.

Acts 18:4: “And he [Paul] reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded *both* Jews and Greeks.”

That shows an indication of what *true reason* is. Here *reason* means: *to dispute, to preach unto, to reason with or to speak to.*

Paul was reasoning with the Jews and the Greeks to persuade them of the Truth. That’s what his reasoning was about. His reasoning was to bring his audience to faith in God’s words *and away from the reasoning of their own carnal minds, which is so normal to each one of us!*

Paul’s kind of reasoning is not contrasting with faith today. What Paul was doing here was the right kind of reasoning. Remember, *we have a reason to believe!*

Carnal reasoning that we’re talking about today is the kind that disputes with Truth. It goes against the Truth to destroy the faith and take people away from God. We already covered this with the example of Adam and Eve.

2. Faith

We are very familiar with this, but we can rehearse this in defining *faith*:

Hebrews 11:1: “Now, **faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen.**”

What does substance mean? *Assurance or confidence!* It’s the absolute confidence of things hoped for. All of us have hoped for things, but have not necessarily received it.

Faith is evidence! ***Our belief in God and His Word is so strong that it is our evidence! If God says it is, that is our evidence!*** We believe it, and we don’t have to see something to say that it’s true. No! We believe it just because God said it!

Verse 27: “By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he persevered, as if he were seeing the *One Who is invisible.*”

Moses abandoned Egypt! Not afraid of the king’s anger! In the strength to follow through was because, in a sense, ***he could see God!***

Do we see God? *We can see God through His Word, as well!* We can look at the stories in the Bible, all the things that we learned, the principles that all come to plan in our lives! We can see God because we can see that things have occurred, and they will occur, and they are principles of the things that have occurred.

We can see it right in front of us. Christ answered Satan in Matt. 4 saying that ‘man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’

When you consider that these are Christ’s words, He said ‘very word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ That does not leave room for any carnal human reasoning. It just does not! ***Believing God’s Word is, in a sense, seeing Him!*** But He cannot be seen through carnal, human reasoning.

What will see? If we think we are seeing God through our carnal, human reasoning all we’re really seeing is a mirror that is showing a picture of ourselves, our own will.

Hebrews 11:6: “Now, without faith *it is impossible to please God.* For it is mandatory *for* the one who comes to God to believe that He exists, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

Christ also spoke of something else impossible. We will see a very clear parallel here.

Matthew 18:2: “And after calling a little child to *Him*, Jesus set him in their midst, and said,

‘Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, there is no way that you shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven’” (vs 2-3).

It is also impossible to enter God’s Kingdom except that we turn around and become this believing little children. I know that living in the time that we do, and we go and see the behavior sometimes of children today, many times we shake our head. Why would Christ refer like this with seeing the behavior of so many of the children today; many spoiled, angry, loud children?

That was brought on with *reasoning!* Even at a young age, children begin to reason. It is a perfect analogy that Christ has given from a loving family. A little child in that environment looks to dad and mom as a source of all that’s good. They’re content and they will become content with the decisions that are made.

The perfect family scenario of raising children, is that the children have confidence, that even when it sometimes is difficult, when they really can’t see the conclusion, they have full trust in their mom and dad.

It’s without that child-like faith it is impossible to fear God. Here’s why:

Romans 14:23: “But the one who doubts is condemned if he eats because *his eating is* not of faith; for everything that *is* not of faith is sin.”

We understand that, we know that concept. It’s about not eating anything that might offend a weaker brother or sister in the faith. Paul explained in this context that we read here, that if we have faith according to God’s Word, that it’s okay to eat or drink something. It might be that we are not to do that in presence of a brother or sister who does not yet comprehend where their faith should be.

God will eventually get to those individuals to the point of their understanding. But the last part of this verse explains why we should not push them. We have to be careful, because whatever is not of faith is sin. **God hates sin!** Even if it’s from the misguided faith, because it still represents rejecting God and His authority in their own mind.

So, on the one hand are life and faith, and other hand there’s death and carnal reason. Let’s spend a little more time looking that the two or three Biblical examples to bring out my point. Let’s see what we can learn from them.

We know the account of Lot very well. I just want to read few key Scriptures demonstrating the principles behind my message. We need to remember that Lot was call ‘righteous Lot’ by Peter.

This was righteous man, and Lot and his family had just been led out of Sodom.

Genesis 19:17: “And it came to pass, when they... [the angels] ...brought him [Lot] outside, *they* said, ‘Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountain lest you be consumed.’”

Verse 18: “And Lot said to them, ‘Oh no, my Lord, behold now, your servant has found grace in your sight, and you have magnified your mercy, which you have shown to me in saving my life. But I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil overtake me and I die. Behold now, this city *is* near to flee to, and it is a little one. Oh let me escape there—is it not a little one?—and my soul shall live.’” (vs 18-20).

Verse 21: “And *the angel* said to him, ‘See, I have accepted you concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. Hurry and escape there! For I cannot do anything till you arrive there.’ Therefore, the name of the city was called Zoar” (vs 21-22).

This was an extremely traumatic experience for Lot and his family. It would be hard for us to imagine the trauma that he would go through in this kind of sudden extraction, a sudden decision that was necessary.

It was very much a society as it will be when Christ returns. In other words, it very much like what our society is becoming today. But as chaotic and perverse as it was, God had just miraculously intervened for Lot and his family. God provided a solution for Lot that he couldn’t have provided for himself.

You would think that we would see a faithful response to that. Yet, we don’t! He was told to escape to the mountains. This is what he was instructed to do. What did he do? *He instead asked to go to a city, that would appear from what we have read, was slated for destruction!* In other words, another corrupt city!

If God had protected him thus far, what would stop Him from protecting them in the mountains? That’s what we need to look at in this story and ask ourselves: What would stop God from intervening for them in the mountains where Lot was so afraid to go? *This is where Lot’s human reasoning came in, and that would stop him!*

One of the obvious lessons here is that there was a righteous man living in corrupt society, and unfortunately that corrupt society affected him. That’s a very valid lesson for us today. We need to look at that, because we are living in a society that is becoming just like it was in Lot’s time.

At the beginning of Christ's parable, He asked that at His coming would He really find faith. When we look at this righteous man as Peter defined him, and look at what we see going on in Lot's mind.

Verse 30: "And Lot went up out of Zoar, and lived in the mountain, and his two daughters with him, for he feared to live in Zoar, and he and his two daughters lived in a cave."

It was wrong for Lot not to go to the mountains in the first place. It was also wrong to go there after being given assurance that Zoar would be spared for them. It's like Lot doesn't know which way to turn. He is so consumed with his own thinking, his own carnal reasoning that he lost the faith of what God had told him he should do. ***The faith of what God would do for him!*** He couldn't come to a good, solid conclusion.

We need to remember what we read earlier, ***that blessings come with faith.*** God wants to bless. He wanted to bless Lot! But that's not really what we see from this story.

Verse 31: "And the firstborn said to the younger, 'Our father *is* old, and *there is* no man on the earth to come in to us, as *is* the way of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, so that we may preserve *the* seed of our father'" (vs 31-32).

We know the rest of that story. It's a very sad twisted sort of a story. What drove them to such a wrong, wrong conclusion. Obviously, it was not faith! It was totally carnal, human reasoning that drove them to the conclusion that they came to.

Would we say that was a blessing from God? ***Certainly not!*** God intervened for them in Sodom could just as easily provided a mate for each one of these young ladies in His perfect timing. That is a timeless issue for people throughout the ages. Will we trust God? ***It's a question of faith and a question of reason!*** Faith *against* human reason!

Let's look at another familiar account of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. We know that there was a mandate put out that everyone was to worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar had setup. Some of the Chaldeans came forward to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego of not wanting to bow down to worship it.

Daniel 3:12: "There are certain Jews, whom you have set over the business of the province of Babylon; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. These men, O king, do not heed you. They do not serve your gods nor worship the golden image which you have set up."

Verse 13: "Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and fury commanded them to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. Then they brought these men before the king."

Everything we know about this man would cause us not to be in his presence, because he was a man of violent passions, and probably very 'short fused.' He was easily incited to the extreme. To really appreciate this, it would be good if we could put ourselves into the skin of one of these three men as they faced the king. A very angry king!

Here you are, you've just violated the law of the land and you know that it carries with it the death penalty. You're being rushed forward to the king who is very violently angry with you.

Verse 14: "Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said to them, '*Is it* true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego that you do not serve my gods nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now, if you are ready, at the time you hear the sound of the horn, the pipe, zither, the lyre, harp, and bagpipe, and all kinds of music fall down and worship the image, which I have made. But if you do not worship immediately, you shall be thrown into the middle of a burning fiery furnace. And who is that god who shall deliver you out of my hand?'" (vs 14-15).

This was not a conversation, but rather an ultimatum that the king gave them. Nebuchadnezzar doesn't even, initially, wait for their answer. So, we know that they had very little time to think about this whole process as they were before the king. Their life is flashing in front of their eyes.

- they know the king's anger
- they know the penalty
- they know the fire of the furnace
- they can see the furnace
- they can probably feel the heat coming from the furnace, from where they were standing
- they were under pressure

In these types of situations will bring out our true state of thinking and our reactions!

This is prime example of where our human reasoning most likely would prevail. If faith is going to prevail, now is the time to show it. It was a matter of a decision that they had to make. ***They could have thought:***

If I don't violate God's Law, I'm now in a position of losing my life and die. Surely Go wouldn't expect me to obey in this case.

They could have started reasoning that way, and that is so easily done so many times to excuse total disobedience to God in a very compromising and difficult situation.

Can you put yourself in being in a situation similar to this? *I'm sure that most of us can put ourselves into being faced with situations like this!* We know that we're supposed to stay very close to God and these three men, obviously, were very close to God.

Verse 16: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we *have* no need to answer a word to you on this matter. If that *is the case*, **our God Whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace**, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But **if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods nor worship the golden image** which you have set up'" (vs 16-18).

They all three stood their ground and realized that it was totally up to God! It was not up to them! It wouldn't change their faith, not in the least! They believe God *was* God; there was no question in their minds; they were very close to God! They prayed every day, and they had living faith!

We know that dead faith is to believe that God is, and God is real, and yet, not choose childlike obedience in the doing part. That is what dead faith is. We know that God is there, but we don't do as He has instructed us.

These three men were very bright and gifted young men. That's why they were selected out of the captives to actually serve Nebuchadnezzar. He wanted the best and brightest in his palace.

There is intellectual pride and there is physical pride. There are all kinds of things we could take pride in. Anything we happen to excel at we can be proud about that. These men were very intelligent young men and they could have exalted in their mental abilities that could have gotten them a 'big head.' They could have reasoned in their own minds,

We have a lot to offer if we stay alive. What good would our talents and abilities be if we don't compromise with what we know is God's will. How could we possibly help anyone.

We know from Scriptures that they did not reason that way at all. That was not their reasoning, and their example has been a legacy to the faithful down through the centuries. They left it totally up to God! It was because of their childlike faith that they made their choice.

Had human reasoning gotten in the way and had been their choice, they would likely never have been even a footnote in the pages of history. They wouldn't have been remembered at all. They,

through their actions, have been able to give what those who rely on human, carnal reasoning could only read about in the pages of a book. It's something the arrogant can never obtain without repentance!

These three young men who were thrust into a snap decision, thrust into a situation where they didn't have time to analyze or assess anything. We have situations every day in our personal lives that may compromise our true understanding, commitment and faith to God, rather than letting our mind wander and reason.

- Can you relate? *I'm sure we all can relate to one extent or the other!*
- What's the first thing we do in the morning?
- Do we pray to God that He be in our lives and help us deal with the struggles of the day, the protection for the day in situations that come up?
- How do we respond to those things?
- Led by human reasoning against God's will?

or

- Do we respond by faith?

That's the key to my message! We all have choices of faith and reason. We deal with them constantly in our conversion process in life. Even though many times we may not even realize it.

Those in Corinth were having a struggle between faith and reason many times. It's recorded as such. It is not uncommon at all in our lives, as well.

1-Corinthians 5:1: "*It is commonly reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—allowing one to have his own father's wife.*"

The Corinthians had a member there within their group who had committed a faithless act. That's what any sin is, *a faithless act!* But it was being perpetuated in their very own congregation.

Verse 2: "You are puffed up and did not grieve instead, so that he who did this deed might be taken out of your midst."

They weren't viewing it with a child-like attitude as they should have. They were reasoning! Maybe it was best to ignore it and let it pass by. The reasoning was all centered around carnality! The straight and simple truth is that is as Paul says:

1-Corinthians 6:9: "**...neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor abusers of themselves as women, nor homosexuals,** nor

thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, **shall inherit the Kingdom of God**" (vs 9-10).

The faithful approach, the one of faith, the instant decision should have been is to put them out just like we put out the leaven, the sin in our personal lives. *Put the leavening out of the Church!* But they were compassionate, very compassionate, open to the sin. *Trying to be more merciful than God!*

Looking at our society today, what do we see? *We see the exact same thing!* That's what we see on a societal level and what's going on around us. We have come to the point that we must be 'politically correct' and accepting perversion, accepting things as they occur, not questioning things all based on human reasoning. We see it every day! Unfortunately, we have to deal with it.

We must look at it within ourselves. We look at it within the Church today and we just deal with it. All of us have to come to the right conclusion.

1-Corinthians 5:3: "For I indeed, being absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged *concerning* him who has so *shamelessly* committed this *evil deed* as if I were present: In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, and my spirit, together with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ to deliver such a one to Satan for *the* destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying *is* not good. Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? (vs 3-6).

The faithful thing was to handle the situation, and ***put that person out so that he may come to himself and repent!*** That's so he could be blessed. That's what God desires for all His people every single time. He wants to bless His people. ***Sometimes we have to just be put back on track in a spiritual sense!***

2-Corinthians 2:4: "For out of much distress and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears—not that you might be sorrowful, but that you might know the overflowing love, which I have for you."

What we see here is that following God's Word faithfully, doing the things we know are right, provides us a great deal of hope. That's where the blessings come in. Paul is expressing, 'Look, I love you people so much!' That's why he said the things that he had to say. Just as he told the Corinthians to mourn over the sin, he also mourned over having to tell them what he did in his first letter.

Verse 5: "But if anyone has caused sorrow,

he has not grieved me, but you all, *at least* in part (in order that I may not overcharge *him*). To such a one this punishment, which *was inflicted* by the majority of you, *is sufficient*" (vs 5-6).

The faithful punishment had produced repentance in this man. It brought him back to God, back into the realm where he could be blessed and have something good.

Had he been encouraged to use carnal reasoning, and be 'politically correct' as the world is today, they would have only have encouraged sin to spread within the Church. That's the farthest thing from the right thing! *That is a faithless act! Instead, they now have a repent brother!*

Verse 7: "So that on the contrary, you should rather forgive and encourage *him*, lest such a one be swallowed up with overwhelming sorrow. For this reason, I exhort you to confirm *your* love toward him. Now, for this *cause* I wrote *to you*, that I might know by testing you whether you are obedient in everything" (vs 7-9).

What we see here is that it happens within the Church even today. The faith of the Corinthians back then was being tried. Our faith is tried continually in so many different ways. I think we can acknowledge that. He got back on track, which turned out to be a blessing to everyone.

It works totally contrary to human reasoning. ***We should never, never be sorry for choosing the course of faith!*** Whether it is appreciated or not, it is the only course that leads to life and God's blessings! We can learn some very valuable lessons from Church history that we find in the Bible. It is so easy, and think you all know this well.

We all tend to get off track from time to time. We all do it, but we also realize that when the faithful are shown the Truth, what we can also know is that they don't say, 'I can not' or 'I won't.' *They just do!* That is what we need to come to. *Just do!*

Luke 23:34: "Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.' And as they divided His garments, they cast lots."

There's one more example and this is ***showing the faith of Christ Himself!*** It's very, very important example.

Luke 23:34: "Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.' And as they divided His garments, they cast lots."

Christ did not say, 'Father, forgive them because they were sorry for what they have done.'

He asked this of the Father before they even necessarily knew that there was a God.

Were Christ's words here a result of human reasoning? **or** A result of faith? That really should not even be a question.

When people are cursing you, as Christ was being cursed, kicked and spit upon, when they were literally killing Him, human reason doesn't say, 'Please forgive them.'

Carnal reasoning wants vengeance! Immediate vengeance! It wants destruction or complete out of the place instantly! That's what human reasoning wants.

Christ was flesh, human like you and me, and He had much opportunity to choose human reasoning as His guide, as we do on a daily basis! Yet, He said of Himself that He could do nothing! Forgiving in the way that He just did, what He said to His Father, that was a super-human task!

How did Christ do that? *Because He understood that He could do nothing of Himself!* In other words, His confidence was totally in His Father, and He was able to accomplish what needed to be done.

John 14:10: "Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I speak to you, I do not speak from My own self; but the Father Himself, Who dwells in Me, does the works."

It was by the Father dwelling in Him through the Holy Spirit, because He was close to His Father. Christ didn't reason within Himself and say, 'Father, We should probably forgive. Or Father, let's try and forgive these people.'

Christ as a man knew, just as did the Father, that the entire Plan of Salvation hinged on forgiving. He knew it and He believed it. He was faithful to the Truth in His mind, and trusted the Father to give Him the power to follow through in this situation.

The same thing holds true in virtually any matter of faith! In all the decisions that we make in our life are a question of faith.

Revelation 14:12: "Here is *the* patience of the saints; here *are* the ones who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

John is obviously speaking about the Church here: ***The saints, the faithful keeping the commandments of God!***

- they don't question it
- they don't try to challenge it
- they don't try to change it

to suit their human reasoning! They believe it as a trusting child can do by the very faith of Jesus Christ! The very faith that Jesus Christ had and still has!

Forgiving is a miracle of spiritual origin. No amount of human reasoning can get us there, **none!** The miracles that Christ did in His lifetime were of faith. The miracles that happen in our mind—we have miracles happening in our mind whether we realize it or not—occur many more times and they are all miracles in our lives.

We need to think about that from time to time! They happen frequently as we continue to grow, overcome and change! They happen by the faith of Christ actually living in us!

The setbacks and the roadblocks in our lives—which are many—can discourage us can be overcome every time with faith. There are many things that can discourage us and set us back. There are many things that can make us quit from our own carnal reasoning.

That's what Christ was concerned about in the *parable of the persistent widow*. True to what He said there: ***without praying always, without staying close to God, we'll find ourselves allowing reason to push faith aside!***

- that's what we must guard against
- that's the point of my message

Our lives are becoming 100% faithful; that's what our goal should be in life! We are not there, yet! I would say that no one is in that position. Some of us are far from it.

- that is why we must continue to grow
- that is why we must continue to overcome
- that's what our faith needs
 - ✓ perfecting
 - ✓ changing

Hebrews 12:1: "Therefore, *since* we are surrounded by such a great throng of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily entraps us; *and* let us run the race set before us with endurance, having *our minds* fixed on Jesus, the Beginner and Finisher of *our* faith; Who for the joy that lay ahead of Him endured *the* cross, *although* He despised *the* shame, and has sat down at *the* right hand of the Throne of God" (vs 1-2).

All the faithful before us have had to learn to let go of the carnal reasoning that can so easily ensnare us all. It's the same thing that we must do! As it says in v 2: ***Christ is the Author and the Finisher of our faith!***

That word *Finisher* means Perfector! ***He is***

the Perfector of our faith!

It is staying close to God our Father, staying close to Christ is so that we can be perfected, that we can have the mind in us and the confidence in God.

Ephesians 2:8: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this *especially* is not of your own selves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, so that no one may boast” (vs 8-9).

The faith of Christ, the living faith is God’s gift to us as baptism! It’s not something that we can work up, as so many have tried to do. When we try to work up faith, if that is in our mind, ***that is just plain human reasoning!*** We can’t earn it by our works. That’s human reasoning.

It’s God gift to those who don’t trust in themselves. It is a gift from God to those who believe God. It is gift to those who have a child-like attitude. It is for a specific purpose.

Verse 10: “For we are His workmanship, being created in Christ Jesus unto *the* good works that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them.”

He has given us the *faith of Christ* to do good works and to ultimately glorify Him! That’s the result of all of this, that we glorify God and glorify the Author of Love and everything that is good.

Isaiah 43:7: “*Even* everyone who is called by My name; for I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yea, *I have* made him.”

Who are those who are called by God’s name? *The Church of God, those who are converted!*

The Church began being called the Church of God in the early days after the Holy Spirit had been given. We were not called for failure, through human, carnal reasoning. That was not the point as to why God called us. We were called to glorify God through the perfecting of our character, by the very faith of Jesus Christ. That is what each one of us was called for.

We have seen today that faith is a choice, as are so many other things in our life. Full of choices! God has allowed us choices. Human reasoning is a choice. Despite baptism or growing up in the Church, we are each free moral agents. Our choices will ultimately lead to life or to death.

If we ever get to the point where we say, ‘I can’t’ or ‘I won’t’ regarding a faithful matter, then we will need to repent and do the faithful thing.

The culture we live in today is one that says, ‘I can’t’ or ‘I won’t! I’ll give up!’ regarding

anything that represents God. That’s the culture we live in. if we’re willing, Christ is faithful to finish what He has begun in a work to God’s glory!

Let’s continue to work towards concentrating on our lives, staying close to God, His Word and ***let our conversion process envelop total faith in God and His works and not our human reasoning!*** It’s a challenge for all of us, but with the power of the Holy Spirit and our will to change and overcome, we can come to living in faith and not letting our mind and human reasoning take precedence over our thoughts and actions.

Let us live by faith and not human reasoning. That is where God will proclaim, ‘Well done, you good and faithful servant!’

Scriptural References:

- 1) Luke 18:1-8
- 2) Deuteronomy 28:1-7
- 3) Deuteronomy 30:11-15
- 4) Deuteronomy 28:14
- 5) Acts 18:4
- 6) Hebrews 11:1, 27, 6
- 7) Matthew 18:2-3
- 8) Romans 14:23
- 9) Genesis 19:17-22, 30-32
- 10) Daniel 3:12-18
- 11) 1 Corinthians 5:1-2
- 12) 1 Corinthians 6:9-10
- 13) 1 Corinthians 5:3-6
- 14) 2 Corinthians 2:4-9
- 15) Luke 23:34
- 16) John 14:10
- 17) Revelation 14:12
- 18) Hebrews 12:1-2
- 19) Ephesians 2:8-10
- 20) Isaiah 43:7

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Hebrews 3
- Genesis 3
- Matthew 4

NB:bo
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