

May 2013

Greetings Brethren:

Now that we have completed the first part of the spring Holy Days and are moving toward the last part, how are we doing with our continuing efforts to maintain course and the focus of coming out of sin? The individual journey that we are each on within the body is very similar to that of the ancient Israelites.

The first event they each actively participated in was the Passover. We also have partaken of the Passover not long ago. Then they each participated in exiting Egypt on the following night. We also have kept the Night to Be Much Observed. It is a perpetual memorial that we are commanded to observe (Exodus 13:9), and in doing so, God says that it shall be a sign. *Strong's Concordance* describes that sign as "a distinguishing mark." Surely it was a sign of obedience so that when the death angel passed over the children of Israel, they were protected. Every other family in Egypt suffered loss of life. So in our day, those called who continue not to participate in God's appointed places under that same sign of obedience likewise will suffer loss of life. However, this time it is their opportunity for spiritual life at stake.

After the Passover, God immediately initiated their journey out of sin. And for those that God had made choice to bring out, it was a night to be much observed. So also for us, for whom God did predestinate to be called in our time to have the opportunity to become one of the future Sons of God, it was a night to be much observed. Then as they were journeying and partaking of unleavened bread, so also did we observe seven days of Unleavened Bread. What an opportunity it was for them to become a free people, and so also for us, what an opportunity has been offered.

So they each left Egypt and went on their merry ways and lived happily ever after.

Ok, not exactly.

We have all read the story innumerable times. They were given this incredible opportunity, but what happened next? Why did they not live happy lives? Was it even possible? Maybe it was bad timing? Was it out of their control? Whose fault was it? God's? Moses'? Someone else's?

First, it was not *their* way. Second, it was not their choice. Third, it was not the way they naturally would have thought to go. And fourth, it was right on time (Exodus 12:40–41). For the other questions, we will see answers to those as we continue on.

### **A Purposeful Journey**

We do see that God had predetermined their journey; it was not by accident:

And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt (Exodus 13:17–18).

And we see how God led them about:

Thus did all the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they. And it came to pass the selfsame day, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies (Exodus 12:50–51).

So the first three annual memorials we observe—Passover, the Night to Be Much Observed and the Days of Unleavened Bread—are reflections of events that occurred with ancient Israel. God had given them the laws, statutes and judgments that would bring them all of the good physical blessings and protections in life, but nothing beyond that was offered for the next twenty-five hundred years.

The next and last spring memorial we observe, the day of Pentecost, is a reflection of the day in 31 A.D. when the New Testament church received the Holy Spirit. Now with the arrival of Jesus Christ, we see for the first time the next piece of the master plan of God revealed. God knew all along that although He would give His chosen people all of the necessary information for happy and successful lives, they would fall short of receiving those blessings. And yet, in the perfect plan of God, He was going to give those physical people a future spiritual opportunity. Their failure gives those called in the end time a chronicled example of what our natures are really like, as well as the impossibility of obedience without the help of God's Holy Spirit. We see this explained in 1 Corinthians 10:11:

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

God is stating here that there is value for us in what they experienced. What is the point of intersection today with those examples, and how are we expected to use the power of the Holy Spirit in our journeys to be more successful than they? We know that they lusted after evil things, they were idolaters, they committed fornication, they tempted God, and they murmured (1 Corinthians 10:6–11). We know that the fruits of the Holy Spirit—what is observable in the lives of the converted—are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance (Galatians 5:22–23). The point of intersection today is the same as it was with ancient Israel. In short, to come to believe.

That belief is exhibited in each of our lives today when we show by our actions that we trust the God we worship is truly Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent. On our journey of experiences, as with ancient Israel, we must come to realize and appreciate the authority God has established. They were given instructions for success in their journey; we also are given instructions for success in our journeys.

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).

But it is not quite as easy as it sounds, is it? No, we get bogged down in our endeavor to apply that verse with stuff like, . . . our emotions . . . and situations . . . and family . . . and work . . . and friends . . . and of course, our human natures. In fact, one of the things we must come to understand—to be aware of and work on—is that we are all *inclined* to make provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14).

### **Israel Was Not Alone**

If we step back a moment and look at the parallel with ancient Israel, God was there all along the way.

And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people (Exodus 13:21–22).

He was the One that led them a certain way. So likewise in our lives, we each are being allowed to experience different trials to guide us along the correct path. And through all of the experiences, He was aware of exactly where they were and was right there beside them. So also He has promised to be there for us today, knowing exactly where each of us is on our journeys.

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee (Hebrews 13:5).

He is like the parent who is right there beside a child who is learning to ride his bike without training wheels. He has already pre-sited the course and knows that it will work just fine. As we are doing our parts, He is helping us to come to trust in Him—that it will be all right. Although it can seem kind of scary at times as we hit bumps in the road and try to keep our balance, He is there watching over us and encouraging us: "Keep peddling, watch where you are going, keep peddling, keep peddling, you can do it, I got ya', keep peddling." So, wherever we are now in our personal development, there is still more left to do. We all need to keep peddling. It is a work in progress which we must continue until God says that we are done.

If we are just waiting to die, or digging in our heels, or making up excuses by saying, "I can't do it . . . I can't do it," or complaining, or pouting, or maybe throwing a tantrum, or whining about how life stinks, or how we do not like the journey, then we have some work to do. Are not those the same things of which ancient Israel was guilty? They never got the vision, did they? Are we any better? Can we see that when we behave in the above manner, we are not exhibiting the fullness of the fruits of the Holy Spirit?

For us to be successful in this endeavor of overcoming, we must correctly identify the problem. The problem is not anyone else. Like a certain party used to say in response to someone wishing him a good day, "I will, if others will let me!" He is really saying, "It is out of my control," or, "It is not my fault." Despite the hundredfold worse experiences Jesus Christ went through, He was still able to maintain a proper mental orientation regardless of what others did or did not do. That is our proper example.

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

So where is the problem? The problem is, instead of having the fullness of the Holy Spirit, we are spiritually deficient, or sick, when we lack that proper orientation.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Romans 8:7).

Among whom also we all had our [conduct] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Ephesians 2:3).



This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind (Ephesians 4:17).

What are some other observable behaviors of those spiritually sick in mind?

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like (Galatians 5:19–21).

Well, since God is our perfect doctor, what did He "prescribe," and how did He say to "apply" it? Unlike practicing human doctors, He, as our Creator-doctor, has diagnosed properly the problem to be in our minds, and the perfect antidote is to be applied there:

Philippians 2:5: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Where is the mind of Christ Jesus going to be in us? In our pockets? In our shoes? In our briefcases or purses? In our Bibles! Of course, I jest, but we all know that it is the mind of Christ Jesus *in our minds* that empowers us to have the strength to stay focused, to resist temptation, to get a grip, to control our emotions, to control our tongues, etc.

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1–3).

If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former [conduct] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (vs. 21–24).

So we read those verses and have a certain level of appreciation for them, but why does it just "not happen"? Because our minds have only so much capacity. We actually have to get rid of something that we value physically to make room for something we value spiritually. That is where the rubber meets the road in working to make it happen. It is not easy. It is hard work. But it is what is required. It comes down to what we love more.

Interestingly, love is the first fruit of the Holy Spirit mentioned. We do not just "Luv Jesus," but instead we understand that the fruit of *love* is really an action word that means that we love all for which Jesus stood—the law, the commandments, the statutes, and righteousness (Psalm 119:172; John 14:15; 1 John 5:3).

Christ showed His love by His obedience, and so that is also what is required of us:

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him (John 14:23).

Part of what made Jesus Christ successful in that command "to love," is seen in Philippians 2:7–8: "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant . . . ." He was just glad (exhibiting joy—the second fruit) to be part of the plan—realizing what an awesome blessing it was. ". . . he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He was able to get over the defiant, independent and rebellious self because He applied what the Doctor ordered. Do we each *see* that defiant nature in ourselves? Do we need to take in more of that medicine and apply it in our lives? We can only do that *if* we are putting out something else. What do you *see* in your life?

When we can come to lay down the self, we should *see* the fruits of that labor—"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Do we *see* God working in us? Or do we (and others) *see* the works of the flesh in us? Do we *see* that we are living the following instruction?:

Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain (vs. 14–16).

Do we *see* the following?

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour [Do we acknowledge all of the Truth and that God is good?]: for we are members one of another [Do we realize and respect that this is Jesus Christ's church and that He has put every member in the Body as it has pleased Him, or do we have issues with some whom He has chosen? Read Matthew 7:15]. Be ye angry, and sin not [Do we have control of our emotions?]: let not the sun go down upon your wrath [If we do make a mistake, are we quick to get it settled, or do we wait for someone else to act first?]: Neither give place to the devil [Is there anything in our behavior that is deceitful, which gives Satan reason to accuse us before God?]. Let him that stole steal no more [Are we honoring God with all our increase?]: but rather let him labour [Are we laboring to put on all of the fruits of the Holy Spirit? It should feel like work.], working with his hands the thing which is good [Are the things on which we *choose* to spend our time honoring

and pleasing in God's sight?], that he may have to give to him that needeth [Are we aware of others and their needs, or are we consumed with the self? Are Sabbath services the only time we think about or interact with the brethren during the week?]. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth [With Mr. Brisby's sermon entitled, "Using God's Name in Vain," how are we doing in applying that medicine to overcome those old habits of mind?], but that which is good to the use of edifying [Are our minds focused on thinking and speaking those things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of a good report, virtuous, and wholesome, or are our minds in the gutter sometimes? Are those in the world with whom we *choose* to spend time, or the things to which we *choose* to watch or listen, causing us to absorb behaviors that ruin good character?], that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God [Is there any area in which we are grieving the Holy Spirit by our behavior?], whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another [Even if we have been "offended" by someone in the body, can we move on, realizing the HUGE forgiveness allotted to us? Or are we allowing our emotions to whip us around so that we are pouting, whining, and digging our heels in like a little child—being stubborn and thereby taking ourselves (and maybe our family members) out of the running for eternal life?], even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you (Ephesians 4:25–32) [emphasis mine].

Love sounds like an easy fruit to put on, but in reality, it is hard to do it to the full extent that Christ applied that medicine. As we each are navigating on our journeys, can we see the big picture and realize that God is right there to protect, provide and keep us going through all of our experiences? Have we been able to come to the point where we are "willing to show up to work" daily with a good attitude and allow God to lead us through the wilderness, knowing that He does have our best interests in mind? Do we believe that the path He has chosen for each of us is for reason—to complete the character-building process so that one day we can hear, "*Well done*, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21) [emphasis mine]?

If we are applying the medicine of our Creator to our minds, then we should be coming to appreciate His law more, and conversely to hate sin more, and able to *see* that we are like those whom Paul was encouraging in Galatians 5:24–25: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

## God's Chosen Path for Them

The reason that God led them a certain way instead of the anticipated way is explained in Exodus 13:17–18: "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt; But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt."

God knows that one of our proclivities is to change our minds and go back to a comfort zone when we run into difficulties. But the called have set their hands to the plow and are required to continue to move forward, to remain teachable, to be showing up to work daily. We are warned to stay focused, to remain vigilant, to be on guard and to never lower the standard we have been taught. We naturally have a tendency to think that we can do both—to have one foot in the world, and the other in church. God calls that being lukewarm (Revelation 3:16). God wants us to *buy in*—to be one hundred percent committed.

We are instructed in Galatians 5:1: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." We also are warned that if we see that we have pulled back for some reason from being completely obedient in our areas of responsibility, or if our emotions are running out of control, we need to take heed:

Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? *This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.* A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump (Galatians 5:7–9) [emphasis mine].

There is a reason we are instructed, "This is the way, walk you in it." Hopefully, as we come to apply more the medicine of the Holy Spirit that God Almighty has prescribed, we each are able to accept with joy that journey set before us—that journey which our Perfect and Good God, the author and finisher of our faith initiated.

Brethren, although we know that the trials we experience are not easy, and at times they do not seem to be temporary, in *remembering to believe*, we can have confidence that all things do indeed work together for good to them that love our God. That obedience definitely will be the distinguishing mark of the successful. As we approach the next memorial in the plan of God, may it be rich and rewarding for each of you, remembering all along that God is right there beside us as a Good Father. So, keep peddling! A good reminder as we approach Pentecost this year, is chapter twelve of Hebrews, something to keep in the forefront of our thinking as we reflect upon the awesome opportunity offered to each of the called.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn

away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.

With much love and respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David F. Brandenburg". The script is cursive and fluid, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

David F. Brandenburg

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jon W. Brisby". The script is cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Jon W. Brisby