

Christian Living Series 2, sermon # 104
The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit

Faith #13

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Edited Sermon Transcript

Greetings, brethren. This now, actually, is tape number thirteen on the series dealing with the subject of faith. Of course, the overall series on the fruits of God's Holy Spirit is much, much larger than that. But, for the series on faith itself—that is, the fruit of faith—we have completed in twelve tapes the subject within that portion of the Bible commonly called the Old Testament, and we are now going to begin to attempt to unravel some of the circumstances within the New Testament, using the Old as a base, of course, and then giving it its broader definition in terms of its amplification in the new covenant relationship, or the New Testament as it is commonly called.

So, we are going to start right off by getting into the actual words—that is, the Greek words—that convey this concept of faith. And before we actually begin, I would just simply like to say that we are going to deal with it from two different vantage points. To really comprehend it in the New Testament, you have to deal with it from the negative as well as from the positive. In other words, the term "unbelief" in the New Testament just simply means one who does not have faith. So, we are going to deal with the premise from both the negative aspect—or lack of it, or those who are devoid of it—plus the reality of faith and those who do manifest it. In so doing, of course, we will see precisely what is expected of us and also what happens when we do not manifest the necessary ingredient of faith or confidence in God.

Concerning the first word that we want to cover, if you are familiar at all with the coinage of words in the English, you will grasp the significance of this particular word—in fact, the first three or four words—from the Greek New Testament. The letter "a" in the front of a word always negates it. In other words, we talk very frequently about "morality," and there is a term spelled a-m-o-r-a-l—"amoral," which

means that it is contrary to the principle of morality. Alright, the same principle is employed in the Greek.

So, if you will recall, because I've given this to you many times, the word for "faith" is *pistis*—p-i-s-t-i-s. But it's oftentimes given the negative sense by just simply putting an "a" in front of it. And so, the first few words that we are going to cover are the words which negate—that is, they are the negative aspect of—the subject itself. So, the first one is a-p-i-s-t-e-o—*apisteo*. In other words, p-i-s-t-e-o—*pisteo*—is a breakdown, or derivative, of the basic Greek word that means to have faith, and then you add the "a" to it, and that negates it.

So, with that in mind, let's consider its first application as I have broken it down into broad, generalized subtopics. Number one, and I want to explain as we go along, real faith cannot come by physical means. What I am saying here is strictly this: faith is not an ingredient of flesh. We are not born with it, we cannot naturally manifest it. It is a spiritual trait, a spiritual characteristic, and until God calls somebody—and until God, through the power of His Holy Spirit gives us those fruits—we will never have it. I don't care how "good" a man is, no good men ever will have faith. Faith is a spiritual ingredient and it cannot come unless God gives it, because men—who are carnal, by nature—cannot of themselves manifest any spiritual trait or characteristic.

Now, they may manifest a certain element of goodness. After all, did not God say of Adam and Eve that their nature was both good and evil? So there is an element of "goodness"—whatever the application may be there, and it isn't our intent to analyze, nor uncover, the real dimension of "goodness" as applied to our original parents. That's not our intent today. But we know that within man is the ability to manifest some rather fine traits and characteristics. They, who by nature, are able to do various things—even as the Apostle Paul said. There are people who walk up and down the streets of most cities around the world who manifest many traits and characteristics that probably are superior, in many ways, to some of those manifested by even those that are called by God. Yet, the one is spiritually oriented and the other one is still but carnal, and there is a giant, giant difference. And people have not been able to grasp that. I know there are many people who will stand right up on their ears and argue about that very concept. Let them argue, it's immaterial to me. One of these days, when the reality becomes known, it is going to be understood. That is, when God makes these principles

stand out in their awesome, sharp relief, people are not going to argue at that time, I'll tell you for sure. But what I am telling you is that men are not born with any spiritual traits or characteristics. I don't care how many good traits and good characteristics of the flesh they may manifest, they do not have it. And until God calls us and gives us that Spirit, we cannot manifest spiritual traits or characteristics.

So, let me get back to the subtopic as I have given it to you: real faith cannot come by physical means. That is, it cannot be conjured up; it is not innate; it is not native; it is not a natural ingredient, or trait, or characteristic among men; it comes by no application of diligence, fervency, drive, purpose, or anything else. It comes by no such means. Otherwise, what we would do is to say that we wrought our own salvation, and we cannot do that. "The just shall live by faith." If the just are going to live by faith, then it is something completely outside of the domain, or realm, of the natural, carnal man, because salvation is a gift of God. So it is going to have to come as some kind of gift.

Now, I want us to notice just a few texts—as a matter of fact, I have three of them written down here—as substantiation for this concept which I have given to you. So here in Mark the sixteenth chapter. Mark 16, and let's note verse 11. Mark had something to say about this very concept that strongly supports what I mentioned earlier. Mark 16:11: "And they . . ." That is, the disciples—the twelve that Jesus Christ had chosen. And He had been with them now, teaching them, personally, for three and one-half years. They had seen all kinds of miracles and every kind of thing that most of us think if we had ever seen, we would never disbelieve again. Well, that shows you how human beings can deceive themselves. They stand out there, you know, and they are convinced that they would never have done what Adam did. They are absolutely sure that they would never do what Saul did. They are sure that they would never have experienced any of the wretched, miserable failures of many of our ancestors. No, they would never have done that. The only thing is, while they are claiming that, they are doing many times worse, and they don't even realize it. So, deception is a mystery, indeed. It is a clever, clever concept. We deceive ourselves—we talk ourselves into almost anything and we don't even realize it. I'm talking about man in general. But all too frequently, we do that within God's church as well. If we are not real careful, deception can play havoc within our lives also.

So, here for three and one-half years, they had been with Christ. They had seen miracle, after miracle, after miracle. They had heard the very words of Jesus Christ. They had actually encountered circumstances in which God Himself had powerfully intervened and they had seen great miracles—even in the thunderous voice of God. They had heard all kinds of things. And, yet, when the very hour came in the fulfillment of something Christ had mentioned over, and over, and over, and over, they didn't even believe it. They didn't even believe it. Here now in Mark 16 and verse 11, it says, "And they [that is, the twelve, or the eleven, by this time], when they had heard that he was alive . . ." That is, if you will remember, a couple of the women had heard about it, and they had gone over and looked in the grave. They had found even the white, linen clothes there, and they had come back and were absolutely ecstatic about the fact that He was no longer there—He was resurrected. So, here they raced back to tell the apostles, and the apostles said, yeah, what kind of tale is this? They didn't believe it at all. I'm even going to read to you that they called it a tale. Alright, here it says, "And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her [Mary, in this case, if you will remember], believed not." They said, yeah, what did you have to drink? You didn't sleep too well last night, did you? You must have eaten the wrong thing. You know, I can just hear what people would say today. They would have all kinds of clever statements. And if one of you were to go by and announce that such and such had happened, that was as great a miracle as this was at that time, people would have called you everything in the book, and they would do it today, and, unfortunately, brethren, probably within the church too.

And they, when they heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

Now, you would think that surely anyone would have believed, if it could be achieved by natural means, after three and one-half years with Christ—hearing that voice day and night almost—having seen the most spectacular miracles that anyone could ever possibly visually behold, and, yet, at this moment, did not even believe what He had been telling them for those three and one-half years. You see, He had been telling them that He was sent down here, not to live, but to die for them. Oh, I couldn't even tell you the number of times that He told them that. And He began to emphasize this down toward the end of His ministry, and on one occasion, Peter even presumed to rebuke Him. Not only didn't they believe, but they were going to rebuke Him for it, and Christ turned around and said, "Get you

hence Satan"—not meaning that Peter was Satan, but that He knew who was precipitating that comment. And so He said, "Get you hence, Satan," because Satan is the one that robs the Word and takes it away from us, lest we should believe and really respond in faith and conviction. So, when they had heard these tales that had been told about the resurrected body of Christ, they didn't believe it. It just says they simply did not believe it.

So, all the physical circumstances in life will not keep you faithful. It will not do it. Why, to wit, all that happened for us. And, almost unbelievably—and if you hadn't seen it, I guess you might think they were unbelievable—people deny the miracles that occurred in the church. But I have heard it so many times that I now know human beings can do the most bizarre and ridiculous things ever conceivable. And, yet, people I knew fifty years ago, if you told them that miracles didn't happen, they could almost have crucified you on sight, and yet today have turned all the way around and will deny everything. I have heard them deny ever seeing, comprehending, or believing even, that a miracle ever happened within the last twenty to twenty-five years in the church as we knew it. Oh, yes, I have heard them say it. And, yet I, with my own eyes, have seen at least a dozen awesome—I mean tremendous—miracles, and I know that some of those saw miracles. And, yet, they turn right around and deny them because it is to their advantage today.

I'll tell you, one of the biggest miracles was the attitude that they manifested at that time, when they were teachable—when you could actually approach them from a Biblical vantage point, and they could sit down and intelligently think in terms of spiritual things. Today, they will fight like cats and dogs. That's probably the biggest miracle of all—to have seen that kind of transition occur in minds and in hearts.

So, physical things will not make you a believer. Is it any wonder that Jesus Christ—along with many of the later apostles of God—urged us to keep that faith alive? Because when that faith is dead, when you lose it, there isn't any way of regaining it. It's finished. It is a faith once delivered. It is going to be given exactly one time, and if we do not keep it alive—if we do not have enough perspicacity, if we do not have enough spiritual grasp and understanding, purpose, dedication and determination to keep alive the very thing that God gave to us—He will allow it to run bankrupt, or to dry up, and then we are left there with

absolutely nothing. There is no chance of ever being brought back or returning to that faith and conviction again. It just cannot happen—it will not happen. God will allow it, if that's what we will, if that's what we want, but what a terrible price has to be paid.

Now, in the case of these disciples here, they had never yet been converted. They were called of God, yes, to be the disciples of Jesus Christ, and to see these various things, but even right at the last, Jesus Christ said that they were not converted. For He looked right at them and said, "*When* you are converted, then I want you to go out and strengthen the brethren." So here they were, they saw all of these physical things, but they were not called and they were not converted—that is, they didn't have the power of God's Holy Spirit to guide them, and to keep them and sustain them. And, therefore, even after three and one-half years of seeing these various things, they still didn't believe it. They just couldn't.

Now, the beautiful part in their case is that they were not called. That is, they had been called to be with Christ, but never called, as yet, in the sense of conversion. That was yet to happen. And when they were converted, only then were they to go and teach and to be an inspiration to others, as well as to show many people the right Way of Life. Now, when that happened, then they became different human beings. Well, they became different beings. That is, they manifested a kind of courage, conviction and tenacity that human beings simply cannot manifest. They manifested a degree of education—erudition, and a learning capacity—that even held spellbound the great learned doctors of their day. They said, "Well, look, these men don't have any education." They knew that they didn't have letters—they knew that they didn't have degrees—but, all of a sudden, the apostles were accomplishing things that were vastly superior to their physical mentors. And, so, they were quite disturbed with what was going on because they were losing their own grip and their own hold, and people were beginning to look to the apostles—first and foremost, of course, Jesus Christ.

So, we know that they finally came to believe implicitly, and we know that their faith held strong because they never allowed their faith to diminish—they never allowed the conviction that had been given to them to drop, or to lose any of its purpose or orientation. But, up to this time, they were human, and they manifested the very same traits and characteristics that all human beings do—men simply cannot manifest faith.

Now, in Luke 24 and verse 11, we will notice a comparable statement here, and I want to get each one of these. Luke 24 and verse 11—and I told you I was going to read you the text: "And their words seemed to them [that is, the disciples at this time] as idle tales . . ." They said, yeah, who's been deceiving you? What did you have to eat? Did you have trouble sleeping last night? Remember? "And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." And they believed them not. So, all of the physical circumstances—and I am going to emphasize that over, and over, and over, because I don't know of anybody who could have had more favorable physical circumstances than the twelve disciples—didn't help them to believe. Here was Christ Himself and they saw every miracle conceivable. They heard the words, and He reiterated and repeated them. He went over, and over, and over, and over various principles, and yet, when the critical hour came, they didn't even believe the things that He had been telling them. Now, no human being could have ever had a better set of circumstances, that is for sure. So, what makes us believe that we would be any different? Why, the thing is, we wouldn't have been, except for some miraculous thing that happens by the promise of God.

And then in Luke 24 and let's notice verse 41. Luke 24 and noting verse 41: "And while they yet believed not for joy . . ." Now, it is strange how the emotional characteristic of joy sometimes can be so powerful, and so persuasive in our lives, that we even miss the very point for the joy itself—we even miss the fact. Here we are, all elated about something, but in reality, we didn't believe it in the first place. You see, they didn't believe it at all. But now, the more they heard about it, the more joyous and anticipatory they became—extremely excited about it—and yet, they believed not. So many times we are just like that. We hope, and we hope against hope, and somehow our emotions just well up inside of us, and we want so desperately to believe these things, and yet we don't believe them for the joy, the excitement, the emotional dimension of the situation itself.

So, here was an actual application of that kind of emotional barrier. "And while they yet believed not for joy [they didn't believe because of the emotional characteristic], and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?" So, here they were, walking up and down the roads—if you will remember how the various ones on the way to Emmaus were going from hither to yon doing various things, and they were talking about this thing that was now noised abroad, but they didn't believe it. Apparently it was just a matter of, "Well, I wonder what's going

on around here? Strange things are happening." Do you ever hear any statements like that? "Strange things are happening and I just can't comprehend it. I don't really know what's going on." Well, that's what happened to the disciples until they finally became absolute believers, and for the most part, laid down their lives for that faith—the faith that Christ lived, and the fact that Christ had been with them, and that Christ died, and that He was resurrected and has now ascended to the right hand of God. And they finally had to pay with their lives for that conviction. But right at that critical moment, they themselves didn't even believe it. They didn't believe it, even though they were told, and as the Bible says, because of one emotional trait and characteristic they didn't believe—"for joy, they believed not." So, the emotion was so great, the anticipation so mighty, that they didn't really believe.

Now, brethren, that precipitates in mind a very serious question: Just what is this faith? That's a very, very serious question, and one I hope we are going to make very clear before we complete the subject itself.

They simply couldn't believe. It was extremely difficult for them to even accept reality for what it was. Even when they looked, they still didn't believe. As a matter of fact, they began to wonder if somebody didn't slip in and take the body away when they weren't watching—if you will remember part of the story. They began to find all kinds of rationalizations—reasonings—as to why this might have happened. And, yet, despite all of that—the impossibility of human beings manifesting faith—genuine faith, that kind of conviction and belief that human beings are unable to manifest, is absolutely requisite for salvation. You want to know how impossible it is for human beings to save themselves? Here, they couldn't even believe it when they had seen the evidence. They couldn't believe what their eyes had seen, what they had heard, and what they had actually been taught for three and one-half years. They didn't even believe it, and yet the very conception—the very idea—of faith, and that kind of dedication to a conviction, a belief, an orientation of mind, is absolutely necessary for salvation itself. It is an utter impossibility for human beings, yet, it is absolutely essential.

I want you turn with me now to Mark 16. Mark the sixteenth chapter and let's note verse 16. It says here: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Now, we have found that even though the disciples had spent three and one-half years with Christ, they didn't believe.

They had been taught the various principles—the very words of God. They had been told everything that God had foreordained and purposed for them to receive, for Christ said that He had not withheld one thing from them—He had revealed what the Father had given to Him, and He had taught them. Yet, at the very critical hour, when Christ Himself had died, after all that He had taught them, they didn't even believe it. And, yet, the Bible here says, "He that believeth not shall be damned." We will be condemned if we cannot somehow come to that kind of positive, mental orientation—which means a belief that will never allow us to turn from our conviction, or our way of life. It is a belief that will see us through, even if it is invisible and unknown—a set of circumstances that may be challenged or denied by all of humanity. It must be a faith and a conviction that is so powerful that we do not exact any physical manifestation or demonstration—we only know it through the power of God's Holy Spirit in our lives, and we believe it with all that resides within us. That kind of faith and that kind of conviction is exactly what is required for everlasting life, and if we do not have it, we are going to be damned, or condemned, on down the road.

Is it any wonder that God is working within the lives of those whom He has chosen in the development of that kind of faith and conviction—something with an absolute foundation under it, a solidarity such that we cannot be dissuaded or turned from our conviction, our belief, our trust, and our confidence in God, regardless of all of the physical circumstances in life, and regardless of how many times we may be challenged or tried, mentally, physically, or in any other way? Yet, how many people have turned for a whole lot less than that—for a whole lot less than that? God is going to require implicit and absolute faith, brethren, I mean implicit and absolute faith. For, whatever it is in Mark 16:16 which they did not have, that will condemn them to everlasting condemnation, is exactly what is required for the salvation of the individual. Some will not have it and will be condemned. Others are going to have it because they will believe unto the end and will not be dissuaded by physical circumstances, no matter what. They are visionary—they know, they believe. Their confidence and their trust is in God, and I am going to show you some of those principles a little later.

So, he said here, "He that believeth and is baptized . . ." That isn't a flippant expression, and it must not be a flippant consideration in the lives of those who are contemplating baptism, because baptism is a most serious thing. It is the expression, that is, the physical manifestation, of our belief and trust in the reality

of Christ—His death, burial and resurrection and in His living the very principles of God, in the fullness of the Way of Almighty God that is going to be lived by that very life within us, through the power of the Holy Spirit. That's what it is all about, brethren. So, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Do we believe to that extent, or is it a casual thing with us? Or, does it register all the way to the heart, and there is no power, circumstances or force that can separate us from it, as the Apostle Paul said? "But he that believeth not [*apisteo* is the term "believeth not" here] shall be damned.

Alright, continuing with what happens after we have come to recognize that genuine faith is absolutely requisite for salvation. I want us to note the next concept. With regard to those same words, that same message, some believe and some do not. You know, the words that you and I heard, many other people heard too. Why didn't they believe? Why didn't they respond? They heard the same message. Some of them may even have toyed with it, yet, they didn't come through. Why? I want us to notice something over here in Acts the twenty-eighth chapter. I'm not going to try to answer the spiritual significance of that question, I am only going to give you a technical, letter application. The other is very extensive and will actually be explained in the overall subject, when we complete it. But right now, I want us to notice Acts 28. Verse 24 is actually going to give us the word usage, but I want to go back and pick it up from verse 23: "And when they had appointed him a day . . ." That is, if you will remember, the Apostle Paul had appealed his conviction to Rome, and he was going to be taken up to Rome where he could be tried, and carry out and fulfill a purpose that God obviously had in mind.

And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging [even though he was a prisoner, they afforded him tremendous liberty]; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

He didn't have anything else, because when he was preaching, there wasn't anything known as the "New Testament." He was using exactly what Christ had used—the Bible as it was then known. Only human beings began to call it the "Old Testament" because they tried to make it different from what later became known as the "New Testament." In reality, it is all one Bible. That's what it is. So

they tried to call the one "Old" because they wanted to get rid of it. And, that way, they could warp and twist what they called the "New" to suit their own fancy.

So, "he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses," which simply means the first five books, "and out of the prophets," which was another division of what we commonly call the Jewish Scriptures. There was the Law of Moses, and then the Prophets. Then there was a third division called the Writings. And that makes up all of the books of the Old Testament—commonly called. And so we find that Paul was preaching out of two sections of that Bible—out of the Law, and out of the Prophets. That was what we commonly call the Torah and then the prophetic books. ". . . from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." There they were, they all heard it. Why did some believe and others did not? Well, there is only one answer: until God called them to believe it, they couldn't. So, the answer is that those who believed were the ones called to believe it—to hear it and to respond. The others couldn't, just as even the twelve disciples, though called by Jesus Christ, could not believe it until some miraculous thing happened in their lives.

So, some believed the things which were spoken. That is, their minds were opened up—they received it, they heard it, and it made sense to them. Now spiritual things made sense, whereas, only physical things had up to that point. "And some believed not"—they remained physical, therefore, the spiritual didn't make any sense, whatsoever.

"And when they agreed not among themselves . . ." An argument ensued, and I am sure that the argument became a very heated one on the part of those who didn't believe, because the natural nature of man is wrath and anger, because the Truth always deprecates man—it's a reduction of man, and they weren't about to have that. No human being is going to accept that type of thing until he is called and converted—until he sees himself for what he really is.

And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Spirit by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand [that's right]; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive [So we find that there was a

reason they couldn't see—they couldn't understand.]: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted . . . [Acts 28:25–27]

You see, since they were not converted, and God had not called them to receive that conversion process, it did not make sense to them. They merely argued. And what is argument a proof of? Well, the natural nature of man. Isn't it the nature of man that is defiant against the Law of God, for it "is not subject to the Law of God [or to God] and indeed cannot be"? So their very arguments were a proof that they were in opposition to God—that they were still very carnal, doing exactly what comes naturally. So they "understood not with their hearts," and neither were they converted, for if they had been, God would have healed them—that is, healed them mentally and given them the right orientation so that they could have seen and understood.

So the same word flows out across the great expanse of humanity and it falls upon selected ears who will see—or grasp, or hear—who will understand, who will comprehend God's Truth, and who will respond to it. But the rest of them are going to fight it—they are not going to hear, they are not going to understand, and they are not going to believe at all. They are only going to hate it, and turn in a very volatile fashion against that Truth which God has allowed others to see and to understand.

Now, the final point for this word *apisteo*—point number five that I want to give to you today: Does the unbelief of man alter or change the purpose of God? We have people that are arguing about the will of God, and there are people who say, "Well, I don't believe this," and "I don't believe that." Is that going to affect God? Does that change any of God's purpose? People say, "I don't believe in the Law of God. I don't believe in the Holy Days." Does that do away with the Holy Days? I don't care what human beings believe because I never did care what I believed. I only care what God wants, and I know that God said His Way stands fast forever and ever, and that it does not change. And when God says that His laws are His laws, they aren't going to change—they were never instituted only to change. And God said His laws are *His laws* and they are *spiritual*. It is men who attempt to divide them. It is men who have attempted to classify them. I don't

care what their beliefs are—I don't care where they exist; I don't care what their denomination may be. In some way, they attempt to classify and restructure the Law of God so that they can believe what they want to believe, and they all do it.

There are so few people who merely look at it and say, "The Bible is the recorded Word of God. It is the entirety of the Word of God, and man is going to live, not by a single word, but by every word of God." It is the very few—a handful of people—that will ever come to that point that they believe, and they know, and they are converted to God, and they look in fear and trust to Almighty God, and will look at the very Word and say, "Whatever God says; not what I want, not what I think I believe." But they turn to God and believe it implicitly—in all of the instructions and commands that God has given. God gave us those laws, and those statutes and judgments, and that is the premise of our faith and our conviction.

When we start arguing with God, it only means that we do not have implicit faith. What we are trying to do is to restructure it. We don't trust God, we don't really believe Him. We are trying to redesign it to suit our own physical fancy, and we are afraid to leave it up to God. If God said, "These are my words; these are my statutes; these are my judgments; and this is my Way of Life," why don't we just implicitly trust it? But, in some way, nearly every mortal on the face of this earth will argue with it, and all that proves is, to that extent, he is still allowing his own natural carnality to dominate and to rule him. I don't care what the law may be—I don't care which one—when we start arguing with the Law of God, any of the Word of God, it doesn't mean that we have changed God just because we don't agree with it. I should say not. We had better be found in conformity with the will of God, not in conformity with the will that we have structured for ourselves, because that one won't do us any good.

So, the unbelief of man is not going to alter or change the purpose of God—not for one minute; in no way. The wise man is going to look and say, "Tell me, O God. All I want to know is exactly what you want me to do, and please give me the power, the force and the character to get up and get it done. That's all I want. I am tired of this argument; I am tired of trying to sift things out to suit my own fancy. I don't want my will out of it, I want your will." The will of God is expressed in the entirety of the Bible. It is His will, it is His Word. Why don't we just live up to it, and honor Him—believe Him?

I want us to turn now to Romans the third chapter. All of us can look back into history, and when we look back and we read of a certain set of events—circumstances that may have transpired—the immediate response is, "Oh, we wouldn't have done that. Had we been back there, we would have understood perfectly." And, yet, here today, we do many times worse. If that is not a tragedy, I've never heard of one in my life. And, yet, human beings are like that—that's the nature of deception. They look back to these people historically and they feel so sorry for them. Well, I don't think we should feel sorry for them, maybe we should start feeling sorry for ourselves, because maybe we had better start looking at ourselves a little closer and we might find out that they have written some very valuable lessons for us, telling us exactly what our natures are, and how *we* behave, if we will only take the time to look at it.

So, it doesn't make any difference in the Truth of God. Here was ancient Israel, given absolutely everything. Can you imagine a people coming out of Egypt, with miracle, after miracle, after miracle? You know, I cannot even conceive what it must do to you, psychologically, to walk through a mountain of water, say, three hundred feet high. I know, there are those who believe that it wasn't more than about ankle deep. Well, you know, I have some pet expressions for them. As far as I know, the indications are that it was very, very high walls of water, and the common belief among those who really have some respect for God's Word is that they could have been at least three hundred feet—three-hundred-foot walls of water. Can you imagine that? And then when you step down in there, it is dry ground, and you walk through, and here, this water piles up on both sides of you, and you look at it. And you walk through to the other side, and you get out on the other side—to the man, woman and child of Israel (every one of them)—and here were the Egyptian armies coming through, and God let the waters go back and drown them all, until they saw the dead bodies float upon the shores. And then they walk just a few days out into the wilderness, and they didn't have any water, and so they complained, and they complained, and they complained. They had forgotten within three days what had happened back there at the Red Sea—they didn't even believe it. And so, God gave them water, and He sweetened the water up by a special miracle, because it was bitter. That didn't help. It wasn't any time before they needed another miracle; and then it was only a matter of hours after that they needed another miracle. Men can't believe for five seconds without a miracle.

And so, Jesus Christ, said to the people in His day, "You are not coming because you are really interested in the Word, but for two reasons: you want to see a miracle, and because you like to eat." That's what men serve. That's the only thing that really seems to be of any real, appealing interest to them. But does that make any difference? Does it alter or change the words of God that human beings can't believe—they don't have faith, they don't have that conviction? Not at all.

Now, when we think back historically of those circumstances, brethren, let's see if we can't correctly analyze what the Apostle Paul is saying here in Romans 3 and specifically verse 3, but I want to begin in verse 1:

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Oh, no, I didn't misread that at all. I've heard so many times that those oracles that were given back there were Jewish. But here, all of a sudden, it says they were the oracles of God. Now, you take your choice of which one you want to believe. And if you can find any place in all the Bible that says God, the Father, is Jewish, I'd like to see that one. Now, I know that Jesus Christ came through the tribe of Judah. As the Son of Man, indeed, He came through the lineage of David, He had to, because that was the promise. But I am talking about the spiritual dimension. What is the nationality of God? Well, if you can't identify Him nationally, then maybe you had better not call all His laws, and His statutes, and His judgments Jewish.

"For what if some did not believe?" Now, here the Apostle Paul is using perhaps the strongest point of reasoning that could have been used. He said, "What if some did not believe?" What if there were many people back at that time to whom God had given His laws, and yet they didn't believe? Nobody denies that God came down and gave the laws to that chosen group of people, Israel (and Jews were only a part of it). And God gave to them His laws, and His statutes, and His judgments, but that doesn't make them Jewish. He merely gave them something that had always existed, for "they are spirit and they are life"—they are the words of God that have *always* existed. Now, "what if some did not believe? shall their [*apisteo*] unbelief make the [faithfulness] of God without effect?" That is, the continuity of God—the protracted purpose of God? "Faithfulness" means

the unswerving, unalterable purpose of God. "Shall their [failure] make the [purpose] of God of none effect?" Verse 4: "God forbid." Paul said very clearly, as the apostle to the Gentiles (and he is writing to the Gentiles up in Rome here):

God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar [mighty good advice—mighty good advice]; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

So God stands in His purpose, and men are going to be judged accordingly, and if they conform, they are going to be favorably judged, but if they don't, they are going to be judged otherwise. So it isn't going to make any giant difference if human beings disbelieve. It didn't in the day of ancient Israel. Do you think it is going to make any difference today if people go around in the name of Christianity, employing, or appropriating the name of Christ and saying, "We trust in the name of Christ, and we do this and we do that," yet going around saying, "No, you don't have to do this and you don't have to do that"? In other words, they are going around announcing, "We don't believe." Does that make a difference with God? Is that going to alter the plan or the purpose of God? Not at all. Not at all, my dear brethren. Not at all. "For what if some did not believe?" What if today—since this is an example for you and me—there are those who say, "I don't believe that's for us. I don't believe in those things. I don't accept the historical pattern that God had recorded for humanity. I don't accept those things as being specifically for us today"? What if? Does that make a difference? Not at all. "Shall their unbelief make the [purpose] of God without effect? God forbid." Let's just let men be liars, for God is going to stand absolute in His purpose and His Way of Life.

In conclusion, then, for today, brethren, I want us to turn to Second Timothy two and verse thirteen, 2 Timothy 2 and let's note verse 13—a very interesting text here: "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful." It doesn't really make any difference whether we have come up with strange concepts in relationship to the promises, the demands, and the expectations of God or not. It doesn't make any difference at all. God said that His Word is going to stand—it's going to stand fast forever and ever. His Law is spiritual—His words, they are Spirit and they are life. They are going to stand forever and ever, and men are going to be judged by them. They are not going to redesign and reorient the words of God so that men can sneak through. Sorry, it isn't going to happen. Well, I'm not sorry, either. It just simply isn't going to happen.

So, "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful." You know, when things happen to us—when circumstances go on in our lives—by which we ought to learn, we should come to realize and understand God's purpose being wrought in our lives. God is trying to get our attention. God is trying to teach us and give us a sense of direction, but if we don't believe it—if we won't accept those events and circumstances in our lives—that isn't going to change the will and the purpose of God. It only means that we are going to encounter the hard reality of the inflexibility of God's laws, statutes and judgments. So we are just batting our heads up against the wall. But what we had better do is to take the time and to say, "Well, I wonder why?" It's much easier on the head, you know—much easier. Then, when you finally change your life and your circumstances, and you begin to live in conformity with the will of God, you will find that it doesn't hurt so much.

"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." What he is saying is that God has inexorably bound Himself, and He bound Himself from time immemorial, and if He were to change today, He would have to deny everything that He ever taught anybody else. That's the thing that oftentimes I've thought about with regard to His instructions to Adam, to Enoch, to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, and to how many other people? And yet today, people turn right around and have Him changing completely. Can you imagine how Abraham would feel in that day, when God gave him promises and assurances, and then he comes up and finds that "uh-oh, not a thing came to pass. He didn't uphold one thing He promised to me"? Can you imagine him with the right and privilege of pointing a finger at God? Oh, I know, there are many who look at it and say, "Well, since He is God, He can do whatever He pleases." No, what I want you to understand is that God has inexorably bound Himself and He does not change. The Bible *clearly* says, "in whom there is not even the shadow of turning." That's why that God can be trusted. It's men who have remade God into their own images. What a tragedy.

Yes, brethren, unbelief on the part of men will not change the purpose of God. Faith is manifested in conformity to the eternal will of God.

Next time, we are going to cover the next word on this subject of faith.