

Christian Living Series 2, sermon # 105 The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit

Faith #14

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Edited Sermon Transcript

Greetings, brethren. This, now, will be the continuation of that long series of *Christian Living* tapes, and the subtopic on *The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit*, and this particular fruit is the fruit of *Faith*—that is, the fruit of God's Holy Spirit, faith.

We covered "faith" in a considerable number of tapes as it is used in what is commonly referred to as the "Old Testament," but now we have come to the "New Testament"—so-called—Scriptures, and we began covering the word *apisteo*—a-p-i-s-t-e-o—which was the first word that we have covered in the Greek texts. We completed that in tape number 13 of this series on faith, and we have come now to the second word, which is *apistia*—a-p-i-s-t-i-a—and, of course, once again I want to reemphasize, in case we have any Greek listeners out there, that this is an anglicized pronunciation, obviously. I'm not versed in Greek pronunciation, but we have an English orientation and that anglicized pronunciation is *apistia*—a-p-i-s-t-i-a—which approximates the Greek, of course. The term is a significant one because we use the same approach in the English to a very large extent. Oftentimes, we have a word that stands for a particular thing—for whatever it may be (I won't give a specific illustration of it because it is used in so many ways)—but we negate that, then, by using the letter "a." The letter "a" on the beginning of a word negates it. That is, it makes it exactly the opposite of what the base word refers to. That is commonly done in the English because it was done in the Greek, perhaps in other languages as well. So, the basic word here is the word for "faith"—the word *pistos*—p-i-s-t-o-s—but in this case, now, it is a derivation, or a breakdown, of the word itself, with the application of the letter "a," which negates the meaning in its cognate usage here. So the word *apistia* from the Greek, according to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, means "faithlessness"—that is, the negative application of "disbelief (lack of Christian faith), or (positively) unfaithfulness (disobedience)—unbelief." And it is commonly, or basically, used as "unbelief" in the Greek texts here.

Now, we're going to see a number of usages, so let's get started on them so that, hopefully, we can complete this particular word today. First, what are the tragic results of faithlessness? Now, faithlessness, then, obviously has to be the antithesis of "faithfulness." Faithfulness is an action carried out by human beings, predicated on trust, confidence, belief, continuity, and dedication to that principle. When we talk about somebody being "faithful," it means he discharges responsibility unerringly. That is, he is not devious, he is not lacking in character, but he is consistent, he is loyal, he is purposeful, and he is dedicated to that responsibility. If somebody faithfully discharges a responsibility, it means he is trustworthy—you can place some form of confidence in him. But, there are tragic results stemming from the negation of that trustworthiness—something we commonly refer to as "faithlessness," or just simply being untrustworthy.

Here in Matthew the thirteenth chapter and verse fifty-eight, we find that word used, but in order to get it in context, we are going all the way back to verse fifty-three. Matthew 13 and beginning in verse 53:

And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence [in other words, He had been teaching and instructing in the form of parables]. And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished . . .

It was a powerful message of divine inspiration. They were astonished at the things He was saying. Why would they have been astonished? Simply because, by this time, human beings had lost all relationship with God, even those who had been called physically several centuries earlier. And so when He preached the powerful inspiration of the Word of God, it was so antithetical to those things that had been espoused among human beings, that they were utterly amazed—they couldn't believe that He could espouse that kind of concept or principle, and that it was so diametrically opposite to that which they had heard for perhaps their entire lifetimes. ". . . insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?" So they were absolutely dumbfounded at the things He was saying, and the substantiation of those principles by signs and by wonders.

And then they began to rationalize and they said, "Is not this the carpenter's son?"—"Why, He was born right here, He's a local man." And at times they even accused Him of being born out of wedlock. And so they accused Him of all kinds of things because they did not understand the powers that had been manifested—the miracles that they had actually witnessed, but did not comprehend nor understand. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" They didn't even, at this point, realize that they were hearing the words of not only the Son of Man, but the Son of God, and so they could only see that, apparently, this man had been begotten out of wedlock and was born by the seed of Joseph. They did not believe, they did not accept the fact that He was divinely begotten—that He was the product of the power of God's Holy Spirit. And so they again said to themselves, "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?"—"Why, we know His brothers." But they didn't realize that these were but half-brothers, and they merely thought that they were seeing another one of the full sons of a relationship between Joseph and Mary. "And his sisters, are they not all with us? [We see His sisters also.] Whence then hath this man all these things? [How did He come up with such powers and capabilities, when it seems that all of His brothers and sisters are normal and natural. They don't seem to be so powerfully different. Where did this man get all of this learning, this great mental capacity and ability—this mental prowess and capability?]"

"And they were offended in him." You know, all you have to do is show a great deal of ability, trust and dedication, and if it strikes at the feet of the customs and practices of other people, they are going to become extremely offended because they always judge themselves by relationships with others. And when they see themselves as being inferior, the natural result is that they denigrate that individual. It's the natural human trait. And so when we judge somebody, and we find ourselves inferior by all of the circumstances at our disposal, the next step is to ridicule, and that's what they did.

"And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country . . ." Everybody else will receive Him because, after all, "He comes from some other place, and therefore, if He shows great ability, power, capability, or whatever, well, maybe those people possess that. Unique circumstances prevail over there." It is no longer a challenge to them because His relationship is determined by the fact that He is from some strange

country and He, therefore, does not challenge their personal relationships in their own country. So they can still stand great in their power and their capability, in their human relationships within the country—within their known circumstances—because this man is relegated to some other, more distant, area, and therefore, is not a logical comparison to self.

And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house.

The closer He comes to His own, the greater the offense because the greater the comparison prevails.

"And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." It is a strange thing that we reduce our own return by our offense, by our wrong comparisons, by our prejudice, by our distrust, by our wrathful anger, hate and contempt for the ability of someone else. If they had accepted Him for what He was, and asked that He teach them, what could they have learned? But they would have had to reduce themselves in their own mental comparisons, which they were unwilling to do. And, so, therefore, in this relationship, they could only denigrate and hold Him in contempt because it is a natural proclivity of the flesh.

How many of us, brethren, still struggle against that very wretched nature that is indigenously a part of us? When we exist in a given community, or a particular social relationship, that is, the confines of an organization, a group, association, or whatever it may be, or maybe it is a household, and when we look to the confines of that household and find ourselves appearing naturally inferior, we immediately react with contempt, disgust, and disdain, and therefore deprive ourselves of everything we could otherwise have learned? And that is exactly what these people did. And we are born of the same nature. Let's not hold our finger under the noses of these people because, to a very large extent, until we master ourselves today, we are inclined to do exactly the same thing all too frequently. We must accept what we see and try to learn as much as we can from it, to recognize our own station and forget about comparisons, and just sincerely desire to be taught, to be instructed, to learn, and to come to understand by a proper mental perspective or relationship. But they wouldn't do it—human beings will not do that. It takes conversion—and I mean real conversion—to bring us to that level.

So, "he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." People of success, achievement, greatness, or whatever it may be, probably are not going to do that much in any given area where they are denigrated or held in disrespect and disrepute. Not at all. They will go on to where they are respected. They are going to go to some area where they can realize some value—a return for their efforts, their endeavors. But Jesus Christ was not going to pour out His power, His might, or His greatness upon these people who had nothing but contempt for Him—who did not respect His background, who did not respect His true Father. He, therefore, "did not do many mighty works because of their unbelief."

But also, on the other side of the coin, is the fact that even those with powers, and greatness, and ability will not—probably cannot—do some of the positive things they would otherwise do because of that unbelief. It takes a matter of acceptance to be the recipient of those awesome blessings. If the people are not going to accept it, then the miracles cannot be performed. They just simply cannot be performed. Therefore, sometimes, we, in our negativism, miss out—when we go to listen to somebody and we are going there with a negative spirit, for example. And, oftentimes, you know, a speaker can sense that. He knows that there is a negative feeling there—that the people don't believe it. Then, obviously, they are not going to get the maximum delivery—the maximum input from that individual—because it is blocked by that very negativism. And so, in this case, Jesus Christ did not—and perhaps could not—even do these great miracles and powerful things because of their unbelief, because these things result from faith and trust, and they didn't manifest any of that. So the lines of communication were broken down—interrupted—and there could not be the return that they should naturally, normally have had if they had manifested confidence, trust and belief. So, Christ didn't do these things.

It is a terrible loss when we, ourselves, develop a kind of mental negativism by which we block the course and the flow of God's Holy Spirit and, brethren, that is going on too frequently with too many of us today because we are sitting there with a negative, jaundiced eye—because we, ourselves, are interrupting the very flow of the power of God's Holy Spirit. Therefore, we are not the recipients of all of the greatness, the teaching, the power of God through the very ministry, through the very servants of God, through the various channels that God has elected to use. We are not the recipients of those things today because we have absolutely blocked the flow of that Spirit of faith and of power. And so, Jesus Christ could not there do many mighty works because of their unbelief.

When will we, brethren, really trust and have that faith, and quit our struggles, our fighting against, our resistance of the flow of God's Holy Spirit—the power, the manifestation of it? And we must come to recognize, even in the last days, that Jesus Christ is present, that He is addressing the situation in the last days—that Christ is awesomely working someplace, and doing those things that are right and pleasing in His sight. Unless we accuse Him of being derelict, and of God failing His responsibility. And, therefore, we find that one of the greatest curses to befall man in the last days is the resistance against the flow of God's Holy Spirit—by which Christ exists among us. And therefore what they are really doing is denying Christ. How do they deny Him? They don't deny Him by name. People have laid hold of that name—they are claiming it; they are appropriating the name—so it is not a denial by name. It is a denial in the sense of the action, the purpose, the fulfillment of the will of God, and that is precisely what they are doing. Well, Jesus Christ experienced that same thing because they did not believe Him. They did not accept Him as a human being there—they did not accept the fact that He was divinely inspired of God, and that He was commissioned by God, and that He had the power to perform these things. They did not accept it, and the same thing exists in the last days, except in this case, it is a matter of seeing Christ operative through His instruments of the last days.

Now, next, we are talking about the tragic results of faithlessness. We must absolutely manifest faith because that faith, as we are told, is going to be given to us exactly one time and we are going to know it. Faith is not predicated upon a man, it is in the *works* that man does, and the *works* that God called that man to perform are the very works that God gave to him—they are the gift of God—and when God gives that responsibility, it cannot be altered or changed because God never gives an imperfect thing, He just never does. And so when God gives it, He commissions the man, teaches him and tells him to go ahead and perform that responsibility. Then, we hear it and *we* respond to it, and then it is a matter of our keeping that faith alive. And when we keep that faith alive, what are the benefits? The exact opposite of what we have just read here in Matthew the thirteenth chapter. We are going to see the powerful intervention of God. We are going to see the mighty works of God—somewhere down the road, brethren, we will experience them if we really trust God, if we really believe, and if we are faithful in carrying out the responsibility that God gave to us. That is, the commission that he gave to us when you and I heard it, and we responded to it, and we accepted it, and for which we were baptized. When we hang on to that and believe it, in God's own time, you and I are going to see it.

But not only that, in some measurable dimension we are already seeing it. Our eyes can behold things that outsiders cannot see—the fulfillment of the power of that Spirit in our lives, in our relationships one with another. Oh, brethren, we have seen it powerfully in many, many ways, but I'll tell you, none such as we saw this year at the Feast of Tabernacles. That could not have been achieved by human beings, it could only have come as a result of the powerful force of God's Holy Spirit, and we saw the operation thereof. That's what it is all about. There, God could move powerfully because our people made the necessary surrender of their own wills—their own lives—and they allowed the Spirit to flow freely through them, and therefore, it was not impeded. And, therefore, that Spirit could operate, it could manifest itself in all of these marvelous traits and characteristics—that is, the fruits of God's Holy Spirit. It not only manifested itself in joy and in all of the thrills and excitement that were ours, but also in faithfulness. What a joy that was.

Now, let's notice another text here in Matthew the seventeenth chapter. Matthew 17 and verse 20, but I'm going to go back and pick it up in verse 14 so that we can get it in context:

And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation . . .

Oh faithless and perverse generation. Was that a generation that was unique? No, they only get worse. "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you?" What Christ is saying is, "You saw the operation—you saw the things that occurred—why didn't you believe? How come you couldn't really trust? How come you could not maintain confidence and trust?" You see, it isn't a matter of where we begin, it's a matter of how long we can stay. Many people "anon, with joy receive the Word of life," but as soon as a little trial comes along, they falter and they fail. They have no enduring quality. Every little circumstance in their lives—every little trial, difficulty, or whatever it is—becomes a great, major obstacle in their path to faith and success.

And, so, Jesus Christ answered and said: "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I suffer you?" How many times am I going to have to pick you up, reorient you, give you a new shot in the arm, assist you, and help you to realize? What He is saying is that time, after time, after time, the minute we encounter a situation that is troubling or distressing, or creates anger, resentment, or contempt in our lives, we forget our call and our purpose, and then God has to bring some circumstance to pass, out of mercy, compassion and kindness, to bring us back around. And then, apparently, if it has to be done that frequently, we very quickly lose our orientation again. And so Christ said, "How long will I be with you?"

. . . how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the [demon]; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out [Why couldn't we accomplish these things]? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief.

Because of your unbelief. Brethren, it's not a matter of casting out demons, but why is it that we sometimes can't get rid of our sordid problems and the things that distress us? Because of our unbelief—because we just do not really believe the power and the purpose of that Spirit, and Christ within us by that very Spirit. Because of our unbelief we are incessantly badgered by circumstances of life. But when we finally believe, it doesn't mean the circumstances are all over. It doesn't mean that we never again experience a trial, or a difficult situation, it simply means that we are never moved by them. They just don't trouble us—we do not have created within us doubt, suspicion, contempt, or any manifestation of the flesh, because *we know*, and because we have seen the evidence, and we have continuing faith in God. We just know it and believe it, and when we do that, the trial immediately passes on through. It does not lodge; it does not adversely affect us; it does not become an impediment to the forward thrust of our intent and purpose; it does not impede or block us in any way. But our unbelief will immediately cause these circumstances to lodge and to bring about devastating results in our lives—sorrow, anxiety, frustration, anger, misgiving, distrust, or whatever it may be. They lodge within our lives—within our minds. That is, we allow them to plague us. But if we are not plagued by them, if we accept them as having come from God—as the trials and experiences necessary for life—they will

pass on through, and we will achieve the purpose for which they have been given, and our faith and our resolve will be strengthened.

"Because of your unbelief" you weren't able to do these things. Now, human beings simply want a great show, so the only thing we ever think about is going out and moving mountains into the sea, or we go out and we want to resurrect somebody from the dead. "Now, you do that and I'll believe you." Why is it that we always want the spectacular? Because men are born with giant egos, and those egos have to be fed incessantly if they are not destroyed. But what we need to do is to start carving them down to size and getting rid of them. Then we don't have to feed those egos, because sometimes, brethren, just little things in our lives are of more significance and importance than great, giant miracles, like moving mountains into the sea. How many times do you have to move a mountain into the sea in order to be convinced? You know, if it happened today, I assume on down the road you would have to have another one in order to continue your conviction. That's what happens to most people.

And, so, here were the disciples who were being taught and trained, and they realized that, although they had seen their master, and they had seen the results, all of a sudden they found out they couldn't do it because the purpose had gotten blocked in their own minds, and in their own hearts, because of their own carnal traits and characteristics.

So we are not successful in moving mountains in our own lives, and I don't mean literal mountains. We don't have to throw Mt. Everest into the ocean every day, but there are mountains occurring down in your hearts and your minds that you need to get rid of. Why don't you throw those into the sea and get rid of them, and then faith will not be impeded? No longer will it be unbelief, but we will be successful because we believe to the conclusion of the matter. That's what He is teaching here.

Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed [that's the smallest there is], ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Now, Jesus Christ was not telling us that we need to go out and move all the mountains into the sea. That is not what He is teaching. That's the wretched nature of the human mind, because the first and the only thing it is going to accept is the removal of Mt. Everest. And, yet, you know if it were to happen, the human mind would not be satisfied. It never is. Because then, what we would have to do is move Mount Blanc, and once that one is out of the way, then we would have to move something else. No, why don't we get back to the real purpose? Because, here, what Jesus Christ is teaching is that the obstacles involved in carrying out our day-by-day responsibilities (the things that affect us day-by-day)—things such as our own doubts, our own misgivings, our fears and our apprehensions, whatever they may be—can be likened unto great mountains, and we can remove them. They can be removed by generating faith, and that faith must be generated by a trust in God, and asking God to fill us up with that power, as the disciples themselves prayed, when they said, "Lord, increase our faith."

The generation of that faith is not something that we ourselves bring to pass. We do not lift ourselves up by our own bootstraps. Where we start is in recognizing our own deficiency. And so what we need to see, brethren, is the reason for which we are not receiving the things that we are asking for, as these disciples did not receive the thing for which they had sought—the casting out of this demon. Therefore, as Christ said, it didn't go out for one reason: because you didn't believe. Then what we need to recognize is that we are not receiving in our lives because we are not believing to an absolute conclusion. We don't have the kind of faith that we need. So our great Mt. Everests—our problems, the unique mountainous problems that we are experiencing, whatever they may be—whether it's a demon going out, an illness in our lives, a problem that we are experiencing, or a crushing set of circumstances—we are experiencing these things, brethren, because of our unbelief and we need to turn and have implicit faith and confidence in God.

Now, that implicit faith and confidence stems from the fact that we accept the will of God. We are not asking it contrary to His will. Whatever the will of God is, we accept it. Sometimes it is difficult to accept it humanly. For example, is there any human being that doesn't want to live forever, and yet, God appointed a time of death for every one of us. We are going to die in this flesh. Why? Because God said that kernel of grain must die before it can go on into eternity. So it is appointed that we should die, but beyond that is everlasting, *if* we continue in that faith and that belief.

So, let's not impede the work of God by our unbelief—whatever that unbelief may be, whatever the set of circumstances in our lives, whatever it is that is obstructing us, and therefore, we are not the recipients of the will of God as we should be. Let's look back and understand that the problem is not God's, but our own unbelief—our own distrust. And, then, we need to get our hearts and minds right with God so that we are no longer impeding the work of God—the operation of God's Holy Spirit—in our lives, to the full realization of the total will of God in our lives, everything that God has purposed for us.

So, Christ said: "Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed . . ." We don't have to have too much, so let's not look at it and say, "Well, that takes an awesome amount of faith." No, it doesn't. It only takes faith the size of a grain of mustard seed to move a giant mountain. That means, when you get right down to it, that many of us may have very little faith. That's the thing we need to check. And, remember, we can do it—we can test it—because we can ask God and say, "Father, I want to know. Please try me in your faith, in mercy (don't put a problem upon me that is too great for me to bear)." God has promised that, and we can claim it. "But, please, I want to know. I want to know where I stand, because I want to be in that Kingdom. I want to be a servant who is faithful and has absolute trust and confidence in you." For without faith, it is impossible to please God. So, let's ask for that. Maybe we don't want a mountain at the present time, but let's at least go after a few hills—tests in our lives so that we know where we stand, to see if unbelief is still blocking us, if there is a natural impediment in our lives to the achievement of the very purpose for which God has called us.

"Nothing shall be impossible unto you," if you really have that faith, if you really believe. It means, brethren, that our faith is questionable, and we need to start augmenting it. "Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting," said Jesus Christ. So, sometimes it does take a little activity on our parts. It's not only a matter of faith, but sometimes we need to pray mightily and fast about it. And so we may encounter situations in life where faith is going to be augmented by the action we take personally. Is it something that we really want to see altered or changed—the level of growth and development in our own personal lives, or in the lives of others? Then maybe it is going to require a little praying and fasting.

Next, I want us to notice Mark the sixth chapter. Mark 6 and let's note verse 6, but I am going all the way back to verse 1. Mark 6 and beginning in verse 1:

And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him [Remember, we read this earlier in Matthew the 13th chapter? But I want to get this because there is a point here]. But Jesus, said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief.

He was absolutely amazed at their own inability to really believe, even after they saw work, after work, after work. Brethren, how do you feel that God must be looking down today knowing that He gave to somebody a Way of Life—that is, the manifestation of faith? For the doctrine that God gave is called "The Faith." Faith is not just an empty nothingness in which you just sit there and look up to heaven and say, "I believe." Faith is an active entity. It has substance to it, and the substance of faith is manifested in obedience to the doctrine that God gave. It is a matter of action. Now, after they had seen so many things, Jesus Christ felt that they should at least believe and trust. "He marvelled because of their unbelief." And, so, He marveled after they had seen Him, and had seen His very works, and yet they did not continue their belief and trust, but each time had to have another miracle. And you know, it's like a shot in the arm, or a drug. Every time you take a new one, you have to have a stronger one. And so, finally, people come to the point that they don't just require a miracle, it has to be a greater miracle. That's the makeup of this human nature. So He marveled at their unbelief. I wonder if He marvels at the unbelief in those whom He chose in the last days?

"And he went round about the villages, teaching." So there is a teaching going on. Somebody is carrying on that message—that responsibility—in the last days. Your Bible says so. Then all I can say, brethren, is that you had better know where it is, and if you find out where it is, you had better be responsive to it. Not like some who are sitting there just constantly trying to figure out whether it is, or it isn't. You know, that's a wretched spirit in its own right. As though we had the power and the proclivity to make those determinations. No, God called us and gave us the knowledge, and then He said to just hang right on to it. That's the only way you are going to know, because God gave you that ability.

So, if we want to see the powers of God—God's intervention today—if we want to see how God is going to work out circumstances in our lives, and how God Himself is going to begin to work mightily in the affairs of humankind in these last days, we had better believe, and we had better trust, because the people God will use are those who believe, those who are going to sustain their faith and their conviction. And maybe God will equally marvel at their trust, their determination, their conversion, and their faithfulness. Wouldn't it be marvelous to be able to stand in that faith and that conviction? Faith does not manifest itself in doubts. Faith is the antithesis of doubt; it is the antithesis of questioning. Faith is the belief in an absolute. It is knowing, and knowing that one knows—a belief in an absolute. That's what faith is all about. So, brethren, if we are wondering; if we are questioning; if we are troubled and perplexed; if we live in doubt, then we have all the evidence we need that faith is waning, and that we are in deep, deep trouble.

How are we going to recover ourselves from that difficulty? First, as I pointed out to you earlier, recognize your own deficiency, your own inadequacy. You can't do it as long as you are going to uphold yourself in your doubts and your questions. You are not going to be able to arrive at any form of recovery, whatsoever, until you recognize the need exists, and then you turn to God, as the disciples did, and pray, "Help thou mine unbelief"—calling out mightily, seeking the help and the intervention of God. And then God will give it to you.

Brethren, you have been called. There is no question about it. But can you grab yourselves out of the snare of Satan, the Devil, by the help of God and by the power of His Spirit? Not unless you recognize the need. If you really believe that you are doing the right thing—that questioning is right in the sight of God—if you

really believe that your doubts and misgivings are acceptable in the sight of God and that you are legitimate because you don't want to "make a mistake," then you will never come to that absolute faith. You can't. That's an impediment to it. It is going to block the flow of faith, and God is not going to reach back down into that life again and stir you all the way up unless you recognize the need and cry out to Him again to restore that faith that was once delivered. It will never happen.

Is He marveling at our unbelief because of circumstances and conditions? Remember, all of these people felt justified, too. They were going through terrible experiences—difficulties—and many trying circumstances in their lives. If we are going through that kind of thing, we are no different than they. Then we must turn to God and ask that He help us in our unbelief—strengthen us, restore faith, and recover us from the great waves of doubt and misgiving.

Next, I want us to turn to Romans 11. Romans the eleventh chapter and noting verse 20. Romans 11, putting emphasis upon verse 20, however we are going to begin in verse 15:

For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world [Now, I want you to understand that we are talking about what happened to Israel. They were to be cast away, that, by that, there could be a reconciliation of the world.], what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? [Bringing them back, this time, in absolute faith. We are going to see that a little later.]

So they did not receive because they did not have faith. Remember Hebrews 4 and verse 2? Their action was not mixed with faith. They could not achieve because they didn't have that faith. They manifested doubt from the time God called them, all the way until they were finally broken loose, and He said, "I won't have anything to do with you anymore." They turned in defiance and rebellion; they constantly questioned; they had misgivings; they were troubled and perplexed, and every time they encountered a difficulty, the difficulty was greater than their faith or their confidence. They just couldn't believe.

Now, I'm sure, brethren, that if God had never allowed a trial or test to be encountered, and God had only poured out upon them all of the greatness that they had expected, they would have manifested a different spirit and a different

attitude. But they would never have proven anything. Who is it that cannot be positive when all goes well? Yet, brethren, the problem is that when we have that kind of orientation—because all goes well—our orientation is wrong. We are going in the wrong direction, because what we are doing is merely satisfying the demands of the flesh. There is no human being on the face of this earth that does not expect and appreciate the best. "If all goes well, that's fine—that's what should happen." That's the way they look at it. And they are going to accept it, and they will even, at least verbally, be willing to give God the credit. They will say, "Oh, that comes from God." However, in reality they take the full credit for themselves. But it does not give them the right orientation. As a matter of fact, it's one hundred and eighty degrees wrong, because what it is doing is substantiating the dictates of the flesh. And what we have to do is to reduce the flesh—we have to *crucify* the flesh, our expectations, our wants—and we have to come to recognize that it can only be accomplished by trial, by difficulty, by sorrow, by anxiety, and by the many things with which we are plagued in this Christian endeavor. And then, when we, in spite of all of those things, can manifest a positive orientation—and the acceptance of God in faithful continuity and dedication—we are rightly oriented. That's what God is seeking.

Now, notice the example of ancient Israel here: "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world . . ." They were cast away because of their unfaithfulness—because they didn't believe. But, in so doing, it was the reconciling of the world. ". . . what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" So, they are going to be received back, but this time in faithful continuity.

For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not [Paul, writing to the Gentiles] against the branches.

Now, what he is saying is that when things go well with us, because God called us, and there is a purpose, and we have the right orientation and so on, let us not look to somebody else and say, "He's getting his just desserts." Let us not be lifted up in arrogance, because if it were not for the mercy and the kindness of God, we ourselves could be in that same state. That's what he is asking us to

remember. Remember, it isn't because of your prowess—it isn't because of your ability—it's because of the election of God. And if we stand, and are doing the right thing, we don't have any right to look down upon somebody else. Brethren, we are going to have to learn that lesson. We never look down on anyone else because, if we make any progress spiritually, it is because of the will and the effort of God only in our lives. No value accrues to the self—none whatsoever—because we do not have within our own natural makeup the ability to live the spiritual Way of Life. That does not come from the flesh. It comes from the power of God's Holy Spirit, but it is operative in our lives when we are successful only because we are not impeding it. We have crucified the flesh. We are held responsible for the crucifixion of the flesh, and arrogance is not a part of the Spirit. It is of the flesh. So, therefore, we look with mercy and compassion upon other people because we recognize that without the help and the aid of God, we would be exactly in the same boat.

Boast not against the branches [let's not boast about where we exist, and who we are, and what's going on in our lives]. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in [to fulfill the purpose of God. It certainly wasn't because of us]. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off . . .

So, let's just recognize that whoever is broken off, is broken off because of unbelief. The word "unbelief" here is the word *apistia*. It is a lack of trustworthiness. Now, if they were broken off because of unbelief, what's going to happen to us if we don't manifest faith and confidence? Do you think God is going to be partial? The very next thing that is going to happen is that if we have been called, and we have been given the privilege and the opportunity, and we falter in faith in that requirement of absolute faith, we are going to be lopped off, too. I'll tell you, any time you are called, and any time you recognize the real operation of God, you had better fall on your knees and just be grateful to God. That's where the praise belongs.

Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear [how true]: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell,

severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou *continue* in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off [emphasis added].

Let's recognize, brethren, it isn't because of our value; it isn't because of our prowess; it isn't because of any greatness within us, but, out of the mercy of God, He has kept us here today. Oh, brethren, how absolutely I realize that. When I look back at these circumstances, and I realize that I didn't have all the answers, and that I did not understand everything, how easy it would have been for me to have capitulated, to have faltered, to have failed. It frightens me, but it makes me realize that today I stand because of the mercy of God, and how grateful, and how appreciative, I am.

Brethren, I am going to drop it right there because there is so much more that I want to say concerning this. It is so important, and it teaches relative lessons regarding the times in which we are living, because these things were written aforetime for our benefit—for our value today—and, brethren, we had better learn those lessons. Otherwise, as the Apostle Paul said, we are going to be cut off, too. Let's *learn* the valuable lessons of faith; let's *learn* what it is that creates the impediments in our lives—impediments to the realization of the *full* hope of our glory, the glory of everlasting life in the Kingdom of God. And that cannot be realized unless we get rid of everything that impedes the operation of God's Holy Spirit. And the manifestation of the actual work of God's Spirit in our lives is faith. That means that we are moving correctly—that there is nothing impeding, or blocking, the flow of God's Holy Spirit in our lives—that it is moving through us in the powerful manifestation of faith and of conviction, and we will see the results in our daily endeavors. Let's not be men and women of faithlessness. Let's be men and women of faith, unto the full salvation of the purchased possession—your lives, my life—which God has bought, paid for, by the life of Jesus Christ. And then, when we are born into that Kingdom, we no longer are going to have to go through the severe trials necessary in order to develop the kind of character essential for the inheritance of that great, awesome estate.

Next time, we are going to continue in this subject.