

Christian Living Series 2, sermon # 107
The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit

Faith #16

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Edited Sermon Transcript

Greetings, brethren. This is now a continuation of that Christian Living series on the subject of the Fruits of God's Holy Spirit. This is tape number sixteen of the series on the specific subject of "Faith." We have completed the subject in its own right in the Hebrew—that is, the Old Testament—and at present we have covered completely one word in the Greek. Now we have started on the second one—that is, the Greek word *apistia*—a-p-i-s-t-i-a. So we are presently, then, addressing, from a technical vantage point, the subject as defined by the Greek word *apistia*.

So, regarding this particular word, we have already analyzed the three first subtopics: that is, the first subtopic was, "What are the tragic results of faithlessness?" And we spent a lot of time analyzing this matter of faithlessness as manifested by people, and Jesus Christ made it very clear that it is a natural reaction of human beings unless they keep faith alive. Secondly, then, we went into the matter of the deficiency in faith, and what should be done about it. And, then, thirdly, we discussed a particular point: that is, that "faith cannot be achieved by natural means." It is not something that we can conjure up in our own natural lives. It does not come from a configuration of the mind or heart of a human being. It is something completely outside of himself, and that, of course, is why we are calling this, "The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit." Faith is one of those fruits—it comes as a product of God's Holy Spirit.

So man does not have indigenously within him the ability to manifest that kind of faith, for man was created flesh—man is a natural entity. He is going to accept only what he can put his hands on—that which he can prove to himself, that which he can demonstrate, or whatever he can collar and put within the configuration of his limited capacity to evaluate and to arrive at definitive conclusions. Faith is something completely beyond that. It is a conviction that goes beyond the ability of the human mind to grasp, to see, and to comprehend in any way whatsoever.

Now, to the average man—that is, to the man of this world—no matter what his educational level is, he is going to look at a man who exercises faith as being ludicrous and ridiculous, because he doesn't comprehend it. It has no meaning to him. And he cannot comprehend something outside of himself. So, it is the man who understands all things—both physical and spiritual—that is required by God to have an understanding of the limited capacity of men, regardless of what their educational level may be. That is why we ourselves must understand the normal, natural response of a human being who has no faith whatsoever—who is not called and converted, I don't care what his religious identification may be.

You know, people assume a lot of things, but that doesn't mean that they are called or chosen. There are only a handful of human beings who really have that kind of faith, and those are the people who *should* understand both sides of the coin—who *know* what it is to be human and to lack that ability, because they have seen both sides. They have literally experienced both sides. Therefore, when somebody begins to argue or to rationalize, or to reason in circles, you smile, if you dare—sometimes that is an insult (so you have to keep a straight face)—and understand their makeup, the reason they are doing this, the reason they have accepted this orientation in life. It's because that's the only thing they have. They are natural human beings.

Now, when we manifest a sense of contempt and disgust for them, what we are doing is forgetting, like God said of ancient Israel when they came up out of the land of Egypt, "I don't want you to forget what it was to be a servant," because service is the basic requirement of humanity, but it is not an easy thing to perform. We like to be served, but we don't want to serve. And God said to them—and He said it to them over, and over, and over—"Don't you forget that you were once a servant." What was He saying? That the natural inclination of those people, if they forgot that, would be to immediately begin to take advantage when they were in position and they had the opportunity. They would then begin to exploit others for their own personal advantage. That's the natural makeup of human beings.

Now, if we are not careful, and if we don't remember what we were before we had the faith of God—before God gave to us that power of His Holy Spirit—we are, then, going to manifest contempt for somebody else. And God requires that we truly manifest the double knowledge that we possess. That is, we understand all things, and God expects us to manifest that kind of tolerance.

Why do you think God is tolerant, and kind, and beneficent toward mankind? He knows our frame; He knows our minds; He knows what we are, because He made us. And, therefore, in His awesome love, comprehension, grasp, and consideration for mankind whom He made, He is willing to make the total sacrifice Himself. We weren't deserving of it. It isn't because He felt that we were worth it. He gave it because we were worth absolutely nothing, but He gave it because He had total love for us. And, so, our response to other people, then, who do not have that kind of faith—who may even be weak in faith—should be one of tolerance. If we are strong in faith—if we think we are—we had better be the most convivial, understanding, compassionate people of all toward others who have no faith, or who are struggling with the matter of faith.

You know, God has all comprehension—God sees all things—and yet, He Himself turned around and made the greatest sacrifice with the greatest element of understanding. Now, if we are going to emulate God, and if we are going to emulate Christ, it means that we are going to have to have compassion and understanding for those who are weak. The Bible over, and over, and over, and over, emphasizes the necessity of those who are strong, bearing the burdens of those who are weak. Now, that doesn't mean going out and carrying their wood in for them. That means bearing the responsibility of the spiritual manifestation of weakness in their lives. We have to bear that. Now, how do you bear the spiritual weakness of somebody else? You bear it with understanding. I don't know any other way to do it, do you? Then it is a matter of understanding them and showing compassion and mercy in the weakness that is manifested, realizing that they are reaping the consequences of that and they are paying a terrible price for it. So, therefore, you can't do anything but manifest great empathy, great kindness, and great understanding.

So, faith cannot be achieved by natural means. It just simply cannot be. So, let's turn, now, to Mark 16 and verse 14. I want you to notice this, because here Jesus Christ had spent actually three and one-half years in a very close relationship with the disciples whom He had chosen. He had been instructing them, and He was the Son of God right in their presence. They walked together, they slept in the same locations, they were involved in all kinds of particulars where they were together. They lived, ate and breathed together for approximately three and one-half years. And, yet, even after all of that, when the great test came upon them, they miserably failed, and I don't have the particular location marked here,

but if you will remember, Jesus Christ said, "When thou art converted, strengthen the brethren." So, even though they had spent three and one-half years there, they had not yet been what we term converted. That came only with the gift of God's Holy Spirit. It was among them, but it was ultimately to be within them. And so it says here in Mark 16:

Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief . . .

"Their unbelief" is this word *apistos*. The letter "a" always negates the other word that follows. Just like "apathy" means indifference, or the lack of comprehension—an indifference toward a particular situation. Otherwise, we would grasp it and understand it. And so we have, in this case, *apistos*, which means the word *pistos*—and we are going to come to that. It means "faith." But this, now, simply means "faithlessness"—a lack of faith. So He upbraided them because of their faithlessness. He upbraided them because of the natural tendencies of the human mind. They were doing exactly what came to them naturally. They could not comprehend; they just could not grasp it; they could not conjure it up for themselves, but Christ is now upbraiding them because here He had spent three and one-half years with them, and even after that three and one-half years with the Son of God Himself, the chosen disciples of Christ still could not, of their own accord, manifest faith.

Now, maybe we can begin to understand how critical faith is, and how difficult it is to achieve that kind of relationship with God. For faith is the manifestation of a belief in things that have never been seen. They are not tangible, you cannot put your hands on them. It is the evidence of things not seen. You believe things that other people just cannot comprehend. They are invisible—they are of the spiritual world.

And so here are physical beings, chosen by Jesus Christ, trained and put through the school of hard knocks for three and one-half years, and yet, right down at the conclusion of it, in the one great, gigantic test that befell them, they failed. The test was simply to believe what Christ had said just a matter of days before: that He was going to die, and that He was then going to be resurrected. Yet, what was it? It couldn't have been more than, let's say, a week—let's give plenty of time—a maximum of one week had passed, seven days had passed, since He had

told them about what was going to happen, yet seven days later, when someone came and said to the disciples, "He is resurrected," just exactly as He had said, they didn't believe it. They didn't believe it.

Now, don't take any broad swipes at the twelve—or that is, in this case, the eleven—disciples. All they were doing was exactly what you and I would do naturally. It is no different than what we have gone through ourselves and perhaps, all too frequently, still go through today. They were doing exactly what the old song says: that which comes naturally. It's because they were not born with faith. You are not born with an element of faith in you. You are born as a human being. You manifest the fruits of the flesh. It takes the Spirit of God to produce the fruits of that Spirit.

So He upbraided them. What He was doing was chiding them for that weakness of flesh, and He was driving a point home. Because it was after this, in one of the other gospels, that He said, "when thou art converted," then you go and strengthen the brethren. So, what I want us to understand is that faith is not something that just automatically flows out of us. I know how easy it is for us to think it does, when we sit there and we think we understand the Word of God, and we think we have the world by the tail and so on. But how many of us realize how often we change and alter the definition of God's Word in order to rationalize our own behavioral pattern, or our own actions? Sure, we do it. It is the normal, natural proclivity. We will change it; we will alter it; we will give it a definition that makes it look acceptable in our lives, or it makes our actions appear right. But it takes the real power of God's Holy Spirit to finally jerk our tether up short so that we are able to look at ourselves and say, "No, you don't kid yourself in these areas. You face reality for what it is. You have made miserable mistakes." And when you confess those before God, then God will powerfully intervene in that life and begin to create within us the power of His Spirit and the manifestation of that faith and that confidence. I want us to understand this, brethren. That's why I am spending the time that I am on this. It is simply because, my dear brethren, it is by faith that we are going to make it into God's Kingdom. It is the only principle in all of the Bible that tells us there is a hope on the other end of it. By faith we are going to inherit life, and faith is absolutely essential.

Then God is giving us, or allowing us to experience, trials of faith, day by day. If we only recognize them and take a good look at them and see where we

stand in relationship to that faith—faith that is defined by the Word of God—we can know when we stand in that awesome faith, and we have that confidence and trust in God. We can see it, if we don't begin to rationalize. But every one of us, to this day, still manifests the weakness of flesh. It takes a long time to overcome that, let's not kid ourselves. There isn't a one of us who is perfect in faith. Oh, brethren, it may hurt to have to admit it, but then, if I am going to be truthful and honest, I do not possess perfect faith. Do you? Faith comes hard, and I mean hard. Oh, we can argue ourselves around all kinds of things from here to eternity in order to justify our human actions, but that doesn't mean we have achieved anything. We have only manifested the great skill of our own carnal rationalizations. And all human beings have that capability. It is pretty well-honed. They can argue around anything, and if they can't, they just simply say, "Well, it doesn't make any difference anyway." They always have at least an answer.

So, Christ upbraided them with their unbelief. How many of us have seen things? We look at these twelve disciples—and we are talking about the twelve who became the apostles of Jesus Christ, a part of the foundation of the Church, if you please—and yet, after three and a-half years with the Son of God Himself, they still manifested the traits of human carnality. And I know the tendency of most human beings, who delude themselves, is to look at this and say, "Those poor, wretched individuals. I would never have done that."

How many of us believe that if we could just walk for three and a-half years with Jesus Christ, we would have the world by the tail—no problems whatsoever? Well, then we have not even *begun* to understand the principles of the Bible if we think in that way. They didn't. Here was an optimum thrust—an optimum relationship. You couldn't ask for anything better, could you? Because He was the directly chosen of God—the Son of God in their very presence; Who Himself was doing the speaking; Who brought about miracle, after miracle, after miracle, after miracle; and yet, when the test fell upon the disciples, they didn't even believe. What about you and me, now? I tell you, it does not come easy. And you had better do exactly what the Apostle Peter said one time: "Lord, increase our faith." We had better be praying for that faith, and I want to assure you, my dear brethren, that's one of the things that I ask for every time I pray to God. I know that it is needful, and I know that it must be strengthened, and I know that it can only be proven in my life by human experience, for experience is exactly what

produces that. And then I see my own defects, and I realize, then, where I must evidence greater control in my life, and where I have a greater need for calling out mightily upon God. Brethren, you have the same opportunity, if you will just use it. It is up to you.

So faith cannot be achieved by natural means. Have I made that clear? You cannot conjure it up; you cannot work it up; you cannot achieve it by any physical means whatsoever. It is something that is created by the awesome power of God, and by the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit, and it is wrought through the power, not only of that Spirit, but of experience itself. And then we see our defects and we can translate those things, then, into necessary changes in our lives.

Now, the next point that I want to cover is: "Man's inability to believe does not, and never will, change the purpose of God." Let's understand that God's Way is perfect; it is absolute; it is unalterable. God will never change it; God is not going to lower the standard. He isn't going to do what is done in the school system today, where finally they grade on a curve, or they lower the standard, or they change the requirement. God's standard is perfection, and it is absolute, and it will never change. Then, when we view our own inadequacy, and our deficiency, should we throw our hands up? No, because God has promised us the power and the ability—not of ourselves, but to be brought up by that power to the standard that God requires. We can't do it, but there was a terrible price paid for it, and by the very life of Christ being lived within us, through the power of His Holy Spirit, we can neutralize the flesh, we can destroy, crucify, as the Bible says, the entirety of our flesh manifestations—our wretchedness, our lack of faith, our animosities, our indifference, our apathy, and so on. We can reduce ourselves by the power of God's Holy Spirit, and then that great power works within us to create the miraculous conversion that God requires. We can be brought up to the standard essential for the inheritance of everlasting life. But it is not going to happen unless we first recognize that need, and unless we daily, mightily call out to God for that change in our lives. That's how important it is, and, brethren, those who do not have vision, and who cannot comprehend it at the present time, will not bring about that change, because they perhaps think that it is not nearly as serious as I am implying. Until the day comes when they are going to stand before Jesus Christ, and He is going to say, "I don't know you." Then there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. "Where there is no vision, the people perish." We must make those changes in our lives, and now is the time.

God has been extremely merciful to you and me, because we were not sucked under by the terrible influences that came to pass in that Body in the last days. We have been able to withstand those pressures, and those pressures were enormous, and they still are. We have been able to withstand that in faith and in confidence in the Truth that God gave to us, but will we withstand every pressure that is yet to come along? Have we maintained the kind of relationship with God that will stand us in good stead, with power, and conviction, and dedication—translated into conversion—so that in the days of those trials and experiences, we can stand, and we would rather die than to give in because we really, firmly believe it, and we have that kind of trust in God?

God is not going to change the standard, but I'll tell you, He will do anything to bring us up to that level, providing we will recognize our own weaknesses; providing we will stay on our knees and say, "O God, I need your help. Give me the power—give me the ability—I don't possess it. You know my frame. You know how I was made. You are the Creator. Give me the power—give me the ability. Fill me with the power of your Spirit, and above all, the power of that faith and that conviction. And help me to stand, and to stand firm, keeping my eyes on the future rather than on the present. I want life tomorrow—eternally—and I am not going to exchange that for a transitory existence here today. What a wretched exchange that would be."

So, I want us to notice what He said here in Romans the third chapter—Romans 3. Here God gave us a beautiful example, but an example that, through the inspiration of Satan, the Devil upon most of the minds of human beings in the world today, they have neutralized entirely. And they have several avenues by which they do it: one of them is that "it is no longer applicable for you and me, because that was for Israel, and we are not Israel, we are Gentiles." So there is the second one. They get around it in any way they can, so that, therefore, what you read back here in what is commonly called the "Old Testament" is no longer relevant or binding. They get around it one way or the other: that it was for ancient Israel, and we are not Israel; or that it was for that period of time, and no longer applies to us; or that it has already come to pass; or whatever it is. Satan is a past master at kidding human minds, and yet, the Bible clearly tells us that *all* "these things are written for us upon whom the ends of the world are come." Yet, no one wants to believe that. They won't accept it, and yet, the Bible also says, that "man shall live, not by bread alone, but by *every* word which proceeds out of

the mouth of God." That means the entirety of the Bible. How are you going to live by it if you reduce it to the past, or relegate it to the past? No, brethren, that Bible is speaking to you and me, if we are called and chosen of God.

So here in Romans the third chapter, and beginning in verse 1, and this is the Apostle Paul speaking now, or writing, directly to those who manifested an interest in the Truth over in Rome—principally Gentiles. Obviously there were Jews there, but, you know, Paul didn't make a difference between Jews and Gentiles, because the same Truth applies to both. What difference does it make?

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.

Now what Paul is saying here is that they *did* have advantage because the Truths of God—the oracles of God—were given to them. That is, they physically were held responsible for the maintenance of those laws, statutes and judgments of God. God handed those laws and those ways to them. There was a tremendous, an awesome, advantage involved in that. They were responsible for transporting it throughout the eras of time; they were responsible for living it as a physical example; they had been given the most priceless gift that could have been given to a human entity. Even though they could not live up to it, spiritually, nonetheless, they could have derived enormous physical advantages by having been obedient, physically, thereto. You cannot separate physical obedience out from spiritual obedience. Letter obedience is an indigenous part of spiritual obedience.

You know, there are people who will say, "Yes, I know that the Law was given in a letter responsibility, but we don't obey it in that way today. We obey it only in the Spirit." Now I ask you, how in the world can you obey something in the Spirit without obeying it physically? So, I've heard people say, "Well, we keep it in mind, but we don't keep it physically." Nonsense. You are either for it, or you are against it, one or the other.

So, "what if some did not believe?" That is, what if some of them did not really accept the premise of that knowledge which was given? What if they didn't act on it? What if they did not really comprehend? "[S]hall their unbelief [that is, their *apistos*] make the [faithfulness] of God without effect?" The phrase "faith of

God" here simply means the continuity of the purpose of God—that which was initiated from the beginning, that which God had given. For God's Way is eternal, His words are eternal, they are Spirit and they are Life. They are never going to change because God being Spirit, and His Way being Spirit, they will never change. What is the Law of God except the manifestation of the character of God? To change the Law would be to change the character of God, and God's character does not change. And, you know, people immediately try to get around the full scope of that principle by saying that when God is love, and love is the fulfillment of the commandments of God, that this means it is only the Ten Commandments. I'd like to see anybody prove that. What it means is the entirety of the Law of God. It's the same Word, and that Word—the *nomos*—means all of the laws, the statutes, the rules, the regulations, the commandments of God, without exception. And any time you make an exception, you are doing it out of an argumentative principle of the human mind, because you cannot find it in the Bible. It says the commands of God, and they are all the commandments of God, and the statutes of God, and God ordained them, and they are Spirit and they are Life, and they will not change. So, therefore, the definition of the character of God is in the Word of God—the laws and the statutes of God.

So, what if human beings don't want to believe it? Are we going to change the character of God because we don't believe it? Why, of course not. So, even if they did not believe, "shall their unbelief"—that is, *apistos*—make the continuity, the consistency, the eternal nature of God "without effect?" Of course not. He is going to remain the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is always the same because He is Spirit and His laws are unchanging—they will never vary—and I don't care what human beings do. Whether they existed three thousand years ago, or they live today, if they argue against those principles of God, it is only because they have not begun to recognize the necessity of conversion—turning away from the wretched rationalizations of human minds. We are only showing we are carnal as long as we argue, and as long as we are rationalizing in our own minds, rather than to say implicitly, "What is your will, O God? Help me to do it." As long as we are fighting and arguing, we are manifesting the natural proclivity, or the natural tendency, of the human mind, and that is a living proof of it. I don't care what time it was, for God is an unchanging God, and His Truth is unchanging.

The Gospel that the Apostle Paul preached in his day is exactly the same one that Moses taught—Hebrews 4 and verse 2. The Gospel that Jesus Christ

taught is exactly the same one that the Apostle Paul taught after Him, and the one that Moses taught beforehand. That Gospel has never changed, although it has not always been revealed, for God chose the times in which He would reveal that Gospel, and to whom He would reveal it.

So, "what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the [continuity] of God without effect? God forbid." That's why the rationalizations, and the argumentations of human beings do not affect me. I know what God says. "God forbid: yea, let God be true . . ." What does that mean? The spoken Word of God—the revealed Word of God—is going to stand viable throughout the ages, regardless of the arguments of men. And so he says, ". . . but every man [shall be] a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." When we see that judgment process that is going on—the trials and the experiences we are going through—when we look down into our lives and we recognize the cause of our difficulties, and our trials and experiences, we can effect that judgment in our own lives so that we may not have to experience the Judgment of Somebody else in the future. Is it not better to judge ourselves now, and to make the necessary changes, and therefore, not have to be judged in the future and receive the condemnation that comes for willful disobedience?

Yes, man's inability to believe does not alter the purpose of God—I don't care how many groups there are out here arguing, one way or the other, about the truths of God. I don't care what they are saying; I don't care what somebody carves out, it makes little difference. The Word of God, totally, is for us.

And, of course, someone is immediately going to come back and say, "Oh, so you still believe in sacrifices?" You bet I do. The only difference is, the Lamb that we offered up doesn't have four legs, because the Bible says it was not in the very form and the very shape—that is, the image that was cast is not exactly the same as the reality. We are not through with sacrifices. Who in the world ever thought we were? I'll tell you, we apply that sacrifice every single day. I still have to, and I'm quite sure that most of you do, as well. When you go and you beg the forgiveness of God, you take before Him, once again, the blood of Jesus Christ—you take before Him a Lamb, and you offer it up. Now, if we still have to apply the blood of that sacrificial Lamb, why in the world should we not have to obey the laws that necessitated the sacrifice of the Lamb in the first place? Give

me a good reason. I mean every one of them—every one of them—is binding, because they were given to mankind. They were not given to a specific individual for the sake of obedience. They were given to certain people for specific purposes, yes—they were given to ancient Israel, and to the Jews, to transport them and to bring them down to us, as the Apostle Paul said. He didn't say that they were given to them, and to no one else, to obey. He said they were given to them to bring them down unto us. Why don't we read all of God's Word and accept it at face value? So, man's inability to believe, is not going to change the purpose of God.

Now, let's remember what the first point was that I covered today: "Faith cannot be achieved by natural means." We are struggling mightily against odds. Our wretched natures are constantly battling us when we say, "Well, how do we know? Are we sure?" You know, I hear these things, and I not only hear them, but I experience them when I struggle and I say, "I will not allow that still, subtle voice to destroy me," and I fall on my knees and I ask God to increase that faith so that I can stand loyal and faithful to something that He gave. And I *know* that God Almighty gave it, because God said He gave it in the last days, and the consequence of that was that people who could not hold themselves to that faith, turned away from it, exactly as the Bible says. We have seen it transpire.

So, men cannot, by their own natural means, believe it. When they start looking to technical references, when they start looking to the great, and the near great—whether it's in the religious field, or the scientific field—of the world today, they are headed for trouble. They have to have faith in God—in the *divine* revelation which was given to them. And when we turn to that Faith, and when we have that confidence, we are God's—the poor of the world, it says, but rich in faith. Yes, we had better have that faith, and we had better believe with all that rests within us—trusting the revelation of God. Somebody received that revelation and it did not come by any great prowess on the part of any man. It came because of a gift of God.

Now, if man, because of his circumstances in life, because of his natural weaknesses, and because of the natural proclivities of the human mind, begins to argue and to rationalize against it, he is in trouble. For the human mind "is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be." When we find ourselves pitted against ourselves in argumentation, when we are arguing ourselves out of certain

things—and we go through this—if we don't recognize it, we are never going to win the battle. We are up against it day by day, when we have to take ourselves right by the nape of the neck and say, "You get back on your knees and you maintain faith." But if we don't do it, there's a day coming when we will argue ourselves right out of it. Many, many have done it, and we have to keep ourselves subdued.

So, man's inability to believe—that is, the inability to consistently manifest that faith, and never be subjected to that kind of trial, that battering of the mind—is not going to change the purpose of God, whatsoever. Why, we can change our minds; we can change our concepts; we can change what we believe; we can change everything in the world, but that is not going to change God—not one iota.

Now, why then, is Abraham the father of the faithful? Some of us think that because we have gone one month, one year, ten years, that we have gone just about as far as we can go—we have paid all the price we are going to pay. "If God really intends what He says, He had better do it now." We have come to that point in time in which we are instant people, and we not only want what we want instantly, physically, today, but we want everything from God instantly, as well, and we are not going to be subjected to any trials. Oh yes, I hear it. They want it now. Do you know why Abraham is called the "father of the faithful"? Do you also know and understand that Abraham never did see the reward that God promised? Never. And, yet, that is an individual that looked beyond the present and saw the Kingdom of God beyond. He did not ask for the fulfillment, right now, but he knew it was out there in the future, and he believed unto death. That's why he is called the "father of the faithful." I want to turn to Romans the fourth chapter—right across the page in my Bible—Romans 4, and I want to note verse 20, but we are going clear back and get the story beginning in verse 13:

For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law . . .

That is, they weren't heirs because they became the physical possessors of the Law. That wasn't it at all. And some people will read that and say, "You see, the Law doesn't have anything to do with it." But what Paul is showing is that simply because you hold the Law, or because you hold some physical relationship to the Law, it does not make you the inheritor, at all. That's all he is saying here.

"For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." Now faith doesn't destroy the Law, at all, but neither does a physical holding of God's Law make one faithful. All of ancient Israel proved that. "For if they which are of the law"—that is, those encompassing the physical dimension of those who received the Law of God. That's what we are talking about, as opposed to Gentiles to whom the Law was not given. You see, that's what we have just talked about—go back and read the earlier part of Romans—and men have done a giant disservice by dividing this thing up into chapters and verses. Actually, it's a single thread—it's a whole story that Paul is telling. So, if you go back and read the earlier part of it, you will find that what he is talking about is our relationship to God's Law, spiritually, versus the fact that it was given as a responsibility to a certain group of people. In other words, they held it, and were accountable for doing certain things with it, but that doesn't mean that they were given the faith by which to obey it. We all know that. All we have to do is go back and read two or three texts back in the book of Deuteronomy and it will tell you that God knew they weren't going to obey it. He said, "You can't." Joshua said the same thing, remember, in Joshua 24:15?

"For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void." He is talking about those who were born, physically, in accord with the Law that applied back there, physically. In other words, God gave it to a physical people. They were the ones who transported it. But if merely being born into that physical domain, as a physical entity, entails everlasting life, then it makes the promise by faith of none effect. Then if you are not born into the right one, you are helpless—you don't have a ghost of a chance. And if you happen to be born there, you can't get out of it, you are just born into it—whether you want to be in the Kingdom, or whether you don't, you're going to be there. But, you see, that's what some people began to believe.

"For if they which are of the law . . ." That is, if they who were born within the domain of that body according to that physical Law which applied back at that time—if they are the heirs—"faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression." So where there is no Law, there is no transgression. But where the Law is, there is a transgression and there is wrath. Why? Because it is in opposition to the nature of man. Or, that is, man's nature is in opposition to the Law.

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed [Now, who is that seed—I mean all that seed?]; not to that only which is of the law [that is, not only to that physical dimension to whom the Law was given], but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all [Paul is explaining how Gentiles come into this common configuration], (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope [That is, Abraham against hope, believed in hope. Yes, over twenty-five years of it.], that he might become the father of many nations.

He was given the promise at about 75, and it was fulfilled, in part, at about 100. He never did see all of it. He never did realize certain aspects of that promise. He only saw the son, and that son did not come for twenty-five years. How long have you waited?

Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith . . .

I should say he wasn't. He stood fast for twenty-five solid years—twenty-five solid years. And every year was a potential year, and yet, Sarah didn't conceive—no children—and yet, he never gave up. He believed all the way.

And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old [twenty-five years after the promise was given, for the covenant was made when he was about 75], neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.

He never allowed himself to become involved in *apistos*—unbelief. Never. Then, how long should you and I manifest faith? You know, every time something comes up, we want to condition it: "Well, if it's God's will." Indeed, I understand the necessity that it must be according to God's will, but how many of us use that to get around the necessity of hanging on to something for twenty-five, thirty, or even fifty years?

"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith [That is, he believed. He never did allow that mind to waver for twenty-five solid years.], giving glory to God." He consistently gave glory to God for twenty-five years, and thanked Him for having heard, and waited for the fulfillment in accord with the plan and the purpose of God, not his own expectation.

"And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." Are we? Or, do we say, "Well, I'm going to wait and see. I'm going to give Him about three seconds, or I'll give Him three days." Or, are we willing to wait for twenty-five years, knowing that the most priceless thing we can possess is faith? And as long as there is life, there is hope. But I shouldn't even say that, because Abraham died in that faith. So when he comes up—when he is resurrected—that same faith is going to be in his mind, and he is going to see the literal fulfillment of what God promised him. He has never seen it. He has not seen it, but Abraham is going to see the literal fulfillment of that when he is resurrected. So some of us may have to lay down our physical lives and I hope it is with that faith—the faith for whatever we have asked or petitioned—strong and unbent in our very thinking. I don't care what it is. Can we do that and hold on to that same kind of faith, never wavering, never changing?

And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness [so will ours be]. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also.

So now, Paul is getting around to the real explanation of the issue at hand. These things did not transpire for those people back there, but they were written, basically, for us.

But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

If we really believe that, brethren, and if we really believe that He carried out exactly what He promised when He said that He was going to give that message in the last days, and that it was going to be proclaimed, if we really

believe that, and if we will die with that faith and that confidence, we are going to be resurrected in that day with the same faith that Abraham had, and we are going to come up into the realization of our total and absolute faith—that is, the reality of our conviction. Oh, what a glorious and marvelous day that is going to be.

Alright, brethren, Abraham is the father of the faithful. Is he our father? That is, in the sense of that spiritual orientation, as the physical one through whom our lives came? Is he? I'm not talking about our spiritual Father, at all. I'm talking about the one to whom that promise came, who became the father of all that followed. Is he the one to whom we look? Are we walking in that same example—that same trust, and that same confidence?

Alright, next, I have two things that I want to cover here very quickly. Let's look at the blessing of turning from unbelief to faith. We are going to catch ourselves, every once in a while, with a twinge of that unbelief creeping up into our lives. What are we going to do with it? We are troubled; we are perplexed; we are subjected to some kind of trial or experience; we are momentarily distraught—what are we going to do? Are we going to begin to justify our doubts—our misgivings—or, are we going to see ourselves sinking, and in despair, and turn around mightily and call out to God for the faith and the conviction, the stirring up of the Spirit within us, that will enable us to weather that storm, that trial, that experience?

In Romans 11 and verse 23. Romans 11 and noting verse 23. It says: "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again." Here showing the merciful kindness of God. Even though they, humanly, were called of God, the Law was given to them, and they were lopped off because of unbelief, yet, when God re-calls them, spiritually, this time, and they are brought back, they are going to be grafted back into that tree. Of course, if we are spiritually called and begotten and we become cut off completely, as we are told over in John the tenth chapter, we are just finished—we are lopped off. But, in this case, if we catch ourselves and we see the limb, or the branch, wilting, and we stiffen up our resolve, and we turn back to that sap of life—the Spirit of God—then we can become a vibrant, live branch again. But it is going to be our responsibility. So let's abide not still in unbelief—where we are caught in it, where we are troubled. It doesn't mean that you are not going to be troubled. Every one who is called of God is going to be subjected to those trials and

experiences. You are going to go through them. But make your resolve now as to what you are going to do about it, and then you will be successful.

Now, the natural state of unbelief can be forgiven. That is, the *natural* state of unbelief. If we ever turn, having *once* believed, then that faith will never be restored. But unbelief can be forgiven for those who have never had a chance, spiritually, in the first place, because that is the natural proclivity of flesh.

In 1 Timothy 1—1 Timothy the first chapter and let's notice verse 13. 1 Timothy 1:13: "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor [Paul, speaking of himself], and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in [*apistos*] unbelief." He did it because of the wretchedness of his own natural nature, and when he came to realize it, Paul fell bitterly before his God and repented of his wrongs. He didn't justify himself. He said he was wrong, and then he turned around and operated within the revelation of that perfect will of God—the Truth of God, the Faith of God.

Paul said that which had been delivered to him, he delivered to those to whom God sent him. Let's live up to the faith that God has given to us. Let's believe it, and let's not continue in unbelief. Let's act mightily upon that Faith, and let's live it with a firm resolve that is absolutely beyond the influence of any power, force, circumstance, condition, or whatever, on the face of this earth. Remember Romans 8, verses 35 through 39? Is there anything that can separate you from the love of Christ? Don't allow it. Continue in that faith, believe it to the end, and you shall be saved.