

## Christian Living Series 2, sermon # 115 The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit

### Faith #24

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Edited Sermon Transcript

Greetings, brethren. This, now, is the continuation of the long series on the fruits of God's Holy Spirit which we started many years ago, but now we are dealing with the specific subject of "the Faith." Well, actually, it is the subject of "faith," but we isolated that particular word into two areas, as I mentioned to you a few tapes back, because I wanted to divide this one into the generalized area, versus this specific area, and so we are using, now, "faith" in its specific reference, called "the Faith." It is the Greek word *p-i-s-t-i-s—pistis*, how ever that should be pronounced in the Greek. It's a very, very broadly used term, and a very interesting word, as we have seen in a number of areas that we have already covered. "The Faith" is the most significant aspect of our responsibility as Christians in these last days. But we have to understand what "the Faith" is, and we will understand that thoroughly and completely after we have covered all the textual material. So, if you will, now, hook this particular tape to the previous ones, where we have been covering the specific area of *pistis*—"the Faith"—then you will get a broader perspective on the definition, or the meaning, of that word.

Here, now, is subtopic number 8 in the series of questions, or statements, that I am making concerning that specific area of faith. This is point number 8, or subtopic number 8: "The faith actually is a test of continuity." And it is an interesting concept in its own right. Let's notice it here in 1 Peter 5 and verse 9. 1 Peter 5 and verse 9. If you will remember, the earlier part of this is dealing with the fact that Satan is going about as a roaring lion. We don't see him—he is not a visible entity, not to most of us anyway. Occasionally people seem to think they see him, but for the most part, most of us don't see him. Yet, he has a powerful influence in this entire world, because the world is said to be the domain of Satan—the whole world is deceived by Satan. So, here he is, going about "as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Now, we don't meet him as we do some wild beast out in the forest,

which might eat us alive and then we're consumed and gone forever. So, how in the world does he devour us? Well, he's not working on your big toes; he's not working on any physical extremities of your bodies, whatsoever, but he is working on those minds. And he does so on a day-by-day basis.

So, Peter, here, was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write in verse 9: "Whom resist"—meaning Satan. Now, how are we to resist him if he operates within our lives, mentally—that is, if he is constantly agitating us in our minds, in our emotions, in our feelings, and so on? Then, the resistance here, obviously, is the resistance of these natural manifestations—the mental orientation, the uncontrolled emotions and the various manifestations of what happens to us internally.

So, he said: "Whom [Satan] resist stedfast in the faith." Now, it means, then, that the bulwark against all of these agitations—these emotional disturbances, these unsavory stimuli that are affecting us in horrible ways, and so on—the only means by which we can weather these constant storms, is by our confidence in *the* Faith. That is, in the Truth of God—not specifically as the Truth of God (because the Faith is merely the manner in which we view those doctrines themselves). But the Faith, of course, has to have a premise—it has to have a basis. Now, we can say we have faith in a concept, or in a people, or something else, but those are very poor areas in which to place any confidence or trust (in any human being, but above all, in a group of human beings), but when God talks about *the* Faith, that Faith has to have some kind of a physical manifestation, and the physical manifestation is one's action on the basis of the doctrines which we were given.

It is not some ethereal, nebulous thing that we conjure up in our minds, where we say we have faith. Well, how do you prove it, if it is a nebulous thing—an ethereal concept that has no definition, no meaning? So, therefore, faith is manifested in some form, by some kind of action or behavior, and the action or behavior that characterizes, or is an indication of, the Faith that God gives to us, is our obedience to the originally revealed doctrine. And anything less than that is confidence, manifested confidence, in man's own ability—in His own mental capacity—rather than that which was absorbed or received. And yet, we will turn it around, invariably, under the guise of being independent, being free moral agents, or whatever, and we will always equate that with our conceptions—what

we believe—and we think that we have received it directly from God. Whereas, *the* Faith is something given by God, and it is manifested in the originally revealed doctrine, and once we have that Faith, and we believe it tenaciously, and we cling to it with all the force and fiber within us, there is no power, including that of Satan, the Devil, that can destroy us. We have something as an anchor. It is a point—a pivotal point—around which we revolve. It is our form of resolve in every issue or question of life—we test everything by that Faith, the Faith that God gave to us initially. And the premise of that Faith is the Truth that God gave to us, and if we use it, we have an anchor against Satan and all of his horrible, wretched manifestations, in the form of human concepts—whether they come individually, collectively, or in some other way. With it we can test everything—we have a viable test, and a test that will assure us that we are always on the right path, if we tenaciously cling to it.

So it says here, then, that we must "resist stedfast in the faith." Now, the only way you're going to resist Satan, then, is if you remain faithful to that Way of Life, and that is the means by which you are going to be able to resist Satan. It means that if you don't change, and you don't allow, in any way, a shadow—an indication of alteration, of deviation, of change—then you have placed confidence in that which was originally given, rather than in *your* ability to evaluate. Your ability is not sufficient to weather the onslaught of Satan, the Devil. If you rely on it, you are most assuredly going to fall prey to what appears to be the prowess of your own mind—what appears to be your own capability—because that's what Satan appeals to. He says, "Why, you have the capacity—you have the ability." And we start looking to that, and we are going to trust it, because it comes from us.

Since the traumatic experience for many of us a few years ago, I have heard, so many times, people say, "I'll never trust a man again," and they turn right around and they trust themselves. And the Bible tells us very clearly that the most difficult person on the face of this earth to trust is the self. Why? Because it will, invariably, move in accord with its own expectations—its own carnal demands—rather than to be objective, whatsoever.

So, when we sit down to prove something from the Bible, we are going to substantiate the self. There is a 99 percent chance that when we *will* to look into the Bible to substantiate, or to ascertain, what is right and wrong, we are going to

substantiate what we think. What else could we do? You can't lift yourselves up by your own bootstraps. That's not possible. So, how else are you going to effect a proper evaluation unless you look at it from an objective perspective? And the only way you can do that is with the addition of something you didn't have before. Now, all of a sudden, you can look at yourself objectively, because it is another power and it is another force, and that power and that force is God—His Truth—manifested in *the* Faith originally given.

So he said, then: "Whom resist stedfast in *the* faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." The pressures that are going to be brought to bear upon us will have to do, perhaps, with our own skin. It will have to do with our safety, and our own health, because there may be people that are threatening us. They may be threatening to take our lives. They may be threatening to expose us, or they may be threatening to do this or that. It's a form of both mental and physical persecution, and the only way we're going to be able to weather such onslaughts is if we have greater confidence in the Truth that was given to us. You are not going to weather it, otherwise. You are going to uphold the self, because it is always dominant. It is there—it is visible, it is tangible—and it is very real to you. And the Truth of God, or the faith once delivered, can be a mystery, if we have not kept it alive and if we are not alert to it. So, it is a mystery, then, that we must keep current—before our eyes and our minds constantly. Now, maybe you'll understand why you scarcely ever hear a tape in which I am not mentioning that fact. You *must* keep that faith alive. If you don't, Satan is a past master at deception, and you are going to fall to it, which doesn't mean that you are going to turn away and say, "I don't believe anything anymore." You'll come up with your own concepts and you will believe them, and it will have come directly from Satan, the Devil.

So, faith, then—*the* Faith—is always a test of continuity. If the faith were originally delivered to you, that faith will never change. Then, what you can see is that you are doing what you were originally called to do, and you can trace it right back and say, "I'm doing exactly the same thing I've always done." But the minute you start to change it—the minute you start to change it—you are subject to doubt. Is it, or isn't it, the Truth?; or, are you trusting the self?; or, are you are trusting the influence of somebody else?; or, is the self demanding the change for some form of personal justification—whatever the problem may be? If we allow these things to affect us, we, then, will not remain steadfast in the Faith. So, we're going to

have to resist Satan, the Devil, in all of his onslaughts, and the means by which we're going to do that is *the* Faith that God originally gave to us. No other power will do it.

In Jude the third verse, now, we find Jude having to write for that time, and of course, as a prophecy specifically for our time. Well, I should say, it was written in a generalized sense, but it was for our time. He said here in verse 3 of Jude: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation . . ." That is, it was common to those that were called—there's no variation, no deviation whatsoever. It was common. They all spoke the same thing, because Jesus Christ is one—the Spirit is one, Truth is singular. There is *one* Way; there is *one* doctrine; there is *one* baptism; there is *one* Lord. There is oneness, and that oneness is an indication of the power and the operation of God's Holy Spirit and the mind of Jesus Christ within those called.

So he said: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful . . ." Why was it needful? Just the same as it is needful today: because, all of a sudden, we have everybody forming his own opinions. And so he said, "[I]t was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"—the Faith that was given: the power, the means, and the inspiration by which they were obedient to the original Gospel, the doctrine that was delivered.

As Christ delivered the doctrines, so also the apostles delivered that which was given to them; so also the Apostle Paul delivered that which God had given to him. Whatever he received, "that he also delivered," and then, years later, Jude was inspired to write by the Holy Spirit, when he looked out over the small flocklet, and he said that he was motivated to write. Once again, he gave "all diligence to write" unto them of that common salvation, and he said: "[I]t was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend . . ."

So, it isn't the idea that we are out here fighting one another. What we need to be doing is contending with ourselves—contending with our own doubts, contending with our intents and purposes in trying to establish that which is foreign and contrary to that which we originally received and justifying some doctrine, some concept, or some way of life that is, in this case, contrary to that which we originally received. God says that we must contend with our own

minds. We are not contending with individuals out here, this contention is with our own minds. We must contend with our minds, in the thrusts that we are allowing within our own lives, in the desires, the aspirations for substantiation, or approval, of our own concepts and our own ways, contrary to that which was delivered.

Now, God gave to us a Way of Life, and it isn't necessary for us to sit down and ask, over, and over, and over, and over, what was the Way that was delivered to us? We aren't blind to it—we know those things. Now, of course, we do have a lot of people who came in long after the beginning of the church, who somehow believe that *they* may know and understand what the doctrine was, and that is not always true. Not at all. Brethren, I can only say that I know what I was taught and what was delivered to me, and that is what I'm going to hang on to, and I mean with all that is within me.

So, he said to them that we must contend for that common salvation—the Faith that was once delivered to us. He didn't say to contend with the concepts and to arrive at our own convictions. What he said is to contend for that Faith. That faith is the substantiation of what we were originally taught—the absolute conviction of what we were originally taught. We are going to hang on to it, and we will not turn away from it—we are not going to give it up. So, the Faith, then, once again, is a test of continuity.

In Revelation 13:10. Revelation 13:10, and I want to read it first from the *King James* translation here, and then I'm going to read it from the *Living Bible*. He said in verse 10:

He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Notice: "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword"—showing all kinds of terrifying circumstances that are going to prevail in the last days. But, now, let's notice that it has a distinct relationship to those who are contending for the Faith: "*Here* is the patience and the faith of the saints." It means that in this wild melee—and obviously that melee is going to be a vast wilderness of confusion,

religiously, and as such, it's going to test the very fiber of your belief—"Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." For people are going to do their level best to find areas of compromise so that they can avoid injury to the physical body. That's the reason for captivity and a sword. They are going to try to find compromises, whereas, God says of those who possess the Faith: "*Here* is the patience and the faith of the saints," because they won't give in—they will not turn.

There is a day—a day of what we call the acid test—when there are not going to be any doubts. Oh, there are going to be a lot of claims, when people are going to say, "Well, I don't see that it makes that much difference. You know, really it's not all that important. I've never felt this or that. I don't think this is that significant, or necessary, or that meaningful." They will have all kinds of justifications for what they are going to do, and they are going to trust their own evaluation. But the Bible says that those who really believe in that Faith will patiently endure it. They are not going to give in—they are not going to make any of those sacrifices.

So, here he said in the *Living Bible*, in Revelation 13, verses 9 and 10—beautifully stated. Beginning in verse 9:

Anyone who can hear, listen carefully: The people of God who are destined for prison will be arrested and taken away; those destined for death will be killed. But do not be dismayed [*do not be dismayed*], for here is your opportunity for endurance and confidence.

How much more beautifully could it have been stated? You see, it's just like the circumstances that are going on, right now: I've said to you many times that I have, in a sense, felt very sorry for people in this period of time, because of the trauma that we all went through. Everybody was shaken loose—shaken loose from their moorings—and they had difficulty reorienting themselves once again. Yet, I need not have really been that grievously concerned, because what is going on is according to the will of God. After all, God says that even in a more majestic fashion—in a more awesome and powerful manner—He is going to arise again the second time to shake this earth, as Paul said, remember, in the last part of Hebrews the twelfth chapter? He said that everything that can be shaken loose is going to be removed? For what reason? To determine those that are immovable—that are

going to stand fast in their faith. There is no factor, there is no force, there is no power, there is no set of circumstances, that will separate them from their purpose—sword, the threat of life, the threat of exposure, the threat of whatever. Nothing is going to take them away from that purpose. "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." It is a test of continuity. Have we made that resolve, brethren? Are we that determined, are we that effective, in our contention for the Faith that was originally given to us so that nothing can ever take it away from us—within or without?

Oftentimes I will hear people say, and I probably have said it myself, that circumstances outside are not too difficult to bear, but the circumstances within are difficult. It's just like in our own families: we can take all kinds of things from without, if the family stands together, but what if, now, the family is pulling at the seams? Can you justify departure from faith—the Faith—on that basis? You see, sometimes it's extremely difficult, and God did not say that He is going to save them as whole families, or not at all. Sometimes it may even happen that some members of the family will falter, whereas others will come through. How strong is your faith? How strong is your faith? We must very seriously think about these things, for here is, now, the test of your patience and of the Faith. Continuity of faith is manifested in an absolute refusal to depart from the Way initially delivered. You will not depart from it.

Now, that doesn't mean that you can go out here and contend with everybody else. What *if* somebody makes a fractional deviation from that Truth that is not in accord with what you think was originally delivered? One of the factors you were taught in the beginning, as a part of the Faith, was tolerance and forbearance, and if you can't manifest that, you have no right to be there anyway.

There are those who presume to believe that the church must be absolutely without any sin. And, yet, if that were true—if that were true—then the statements of the Apostle John were lies, when he said that he who says that he has not sinned, on any given day, is a liar. The idea is that it is true today, but tomorrow it is no longer applicable. But any day I read the Bible, it means it is a present-tense application. So, today, if I should say that I have not sinned, I do not have His Truth abiding within me, and I have made Him a liar. That means, then, that on any given day, any one of us is, in some way, out of step with God, not because we wanted it, but because of pressures—because of circumstances. And by those

same pressures and circumstances, we sometimes have to be brought back to the Truth and the recognition of that which is right.

So, what we find, then, is that on any given day, we must manifest tolerance, forbearance, kindness, and understanding. We are not demanding that somebody else live according to our faith. We, ourselves, are living according to our faith, and if our faith is what it should be, it requires tolerance, it requires forbearance, it requires understanding and compassion. And we must manifest those traits and those characteristics, for if our faith does not include those things, then we don't have the original doctrine, at all. We've taught that from day one. I heard it from the day I first came in, and I'm sure that was before almost any of you ever came into the church. My time goes way back there. Here, then, is the faith and the patience of the saints. It is continuity of *the* Faith.

Now, the next principle is, "The Faith is a standard of evaluation." Now, we have partially seen that already, but I want us to look at some very pointed texts in this regard, because, you know, any of these subtopics are going to have a great deal of overlap. You are obviously aware of that, but I want to go into, now, two or three texts that deal with this specific element of evaluation. Here in 2 Corinthians the thirteenth chapter. 2 Corinthians 13, and let's notice verse 5. This is a text that all of us probably could quote, but we don't think of it in this context. 2 Corinthians 13 and verse 5. It says: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." Why, there it says, in very plain language that the Faith is the standard of your evaluation, then. And what it also says is that you had better daily effect that evaluation. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." It did not say to prove somebody else. It didn't say to go out and prove the Bible again. You can't do that. But what it did say is, "Prove your own selves." You test yourselves in accord with the Faith which was originally given to you, and that's what God is requiring of you.

"Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you . . ." Oh, now we're getting down to the nitty gritty of it. How did you become a Christian in the first place? When God called you. And you became responsive—you accepted the call—and through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ took up His abode within you. That's what makes you a Christian. Now, if you didn't receive Christ, you are not a Christian. But if you *did* receive Christ, I want you to remember that He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever—in whom is not even

a shadow of turning. So, if you were called, you received Christ. And if you received Christ, then you can't change it. You can grow, however—which means to add thereto.

Now, he said: "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ [who is the Word, who is the Faith] is in you, except ye be reprobates"—unless you have turned away and you have rejected it. That's what he is saying. So, we need, then, daily to examine ourselves to see if that Faith is still alive within us. And we must, then, know that Jesus Christ is in us, and that it will never vary, it will never change, because we were called, and we became the recipients of the very Word of life—which is Jesus Christ—when He took up His abode within us, and it *cannot* change unless we changed, and He left. And then we are reprobates. So, the Faith, then, is a standard of evaluation, and it must be the basis of a consistent daily evaluation.

Then, I want us to notice, next, Philippians the first chapter. Philippians 1 and let's note verses 25 and 27, however I'm going to begin in verse 23 and read it in context. Here he said in verse 23 (the Apostle Paul speaking): "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better . . ." In other words, Paul knew that if he lay down his life right at that time, he had made it. It doesn't mean that he was going up to heaven—somebody will read that, and the first thing, they somehow get a heaven in there. But I don't see any word "heaven" here whatsoever.

Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. [Now notice verse 25:] And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of [the] faith.

Now, how in the world was his remaining there going to add to *their* joy in the Faith? Because they were going to be doing exactly the same thing. "I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of [the] faith." So, here we find, not only continuation, but then also growth—"furtherance and joy in [the Faith]." So, then, here Paul was evaluating, and stressing upon them the necessity of evaluating their lives with regard to the Faith and of remaining faithful to it. Now let us continue:

That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. [Verse 27:] Only let your [conduct] be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

So here, then, is our struggle to remain faithful to that doctrine which came through the preaching of the Gospel, which was commissioned to somebody in the last days, as it was to the Apostle Paul at that time. And he encouraged the people to hang on to the Faith of that Gospel which he had preached to them.

So, we are, then, today commanded to have one mind and one spirit, "striving together for the faith of the gospel." Our striving is not with one another, our striving is against the self, so that when we bring the self into conformity—when each one does that—we can be welded together into the oneness that is truly the Body of Jesus Christ. That oneness, then, will earmark us as the chosen of God. It isn't a oneness that we are setting out to achieve by hook or by crook, or by some philosophy that we have, and so on. The oneness is achieved by the negation of self. When we, individually, negate the self, oneness is the result—we come to that accord, that oneness. And it means that we must struggle against the self with all that is within us.

I want to tell you, brethren, as a result of the Feast this past year, I have made a more firm resolve in my life than ever before. I've told you many times that I intend to be there, I don't care what the cost is. I made that decision, and I hope there is nothing on the face of this earth that will ever dissuade me from that. But I've made a resolve, and since the Feast, I have redoubled that resolve. And there are certain things that are just going to change in this life. And they *are* going to change. And they are going to start with this tongue. I just don't intend to ever get involved in certain things. I don't want to be involved in them. I want to be involved in a positive way—as a powerful influence and help, not of myself, whatsoever, but through the operation of God's Holy Spirit, in love and affection and understanding. You win far more battles that way than you do any other way. I have seen it so many times manifested: just a little affection for somebody that's been struggling, when you go to that party and express a real regard and affection—a feeling of empathy for what he or she may be experiencing. That will do a lot more good than a critical evaluation, which just won't do anything. And

yet, I've seen people turn, almost instantly, with the manifestation of some love and a little understanding.

God says that our responsibilities are individual. We've got to struggle against ourselves, and we've just got to quit worrying about what we think other people are doing. We had better focus those eyes upon the self, incessantly, because any time we start looking at somebody else, we are looking 180 degrees away from where we should be looking. You had better look at the self, and when you do that, I want to guarantee you that the results are going to be surprising, and they are going to be awesome.

I've decided that it is too late in life to just meander through the rest of it. I'm here for a purpose, and that purpose is going to be realized by the help of God. I can't do it on my own, I'm well aware of that, but I already have the promise of God, providing I *will* to have it occur in my life. It does take a combination effort. I can't expect anything from God if I don't will it. But if I will it, in accord with His purpose and His plan, He has already willed to do it in my life. *That* I can take upon faith and confidence. So, I'm going to be evaluating my life henceforward, not on its relationship with other people, whatsoever, but on what is happening in relationship to the fruits of the Holy Spirit and the works of the flesh. And there are going to be the required changes, I promise you that, because Jesus Christ has already given me the assurance that He will do it.

So, he said here in verse 27: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ . . ." So let us conduct *our* lives in accord with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. ". . . that whether I come and see you, or else be absent [it doesn't make any difference if I am here or someplace else], I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit"—that you are not going to predicate it upon any individual. What you are doing is predicating it upon a love for God's Truth, and you are going to stay in that posture, and there is nothing—there is no set of circumstances on the face of the earth—that will separate you out from it.

. . . with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; And in nothing terrified by your adversaries [I don't care who they are, as I said before, within or without, it doesn't make any difference]: which is to them an evident token of perdition.

In other words, to them, they look at it and say, "He's a stubborn old cuss, isn't he?" To them it is "an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation." Isn't it interesting that that is exactly how they have dubbed us—stubborn and obstinate, because we won't do the changing? "[B]ut to [us] of salvation, and that of God."

Now, point number ten: "The faith level is determined by individual actions." That is, how do we know how replete the Faith is within our lives? Is it a matter of what we say? No, you can't trust human beings, can you? So, when you say, "Well, I have plenty of faith, and I know *the* Faith is within me," that doesn't mean anything to me. What really means something is the action, for the actions, that is, the things that you do—the day-by-day behavior, the day-by-day conduct of your lives—tells me what level of *the* Faith is in you. Is it not comparable to the very statement of Jesus Christ when He said that "by their words they are going to be judged"—both for good and for bad? Our actions are going to speak. They speak a whole lot louder than our words. Our words are merely going to reflect either our deception—that is, what we conceive in our own minds—or they are going to reflect the conceptions of the Gospel—*the* Faith, the Way of Life. They are going to reflect one or the other. Then, how are you going to know which one is which? You can't take it on the basis of what a human being says, then. So, in other words, the only way you're going to evaluate those words is on the basis of whatever the Faith is, and that is the doctrine originally delivered—that is, the confidence in those principles (concepts) that were originally delivered. So, the level of our faith is determined by our individual actions. We can read them—we can see what a man is. He doesn't have to say a word, we can just simply see it.

In Romans 14, and let's note verse 1. Romans 14 and noting verse 1. It says: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." Him that is weak in the Faith. That is, he may have a questioning spirit; he may have problems getting certain things oriented in his life; he may be having all kinds of difficulties because he has been traumatized, either within or without. Then, what does God say of those who are stronger? "[R]eceive ye [him], but not to doubtful disputations." Don't take him in and say, "But let me get you straightened out here." That's what Paul is saying. The first thing that people want to do when somebody disagrees with them, or when somebody has a question about the character or the orientation of somebody else, is that they feel it is

absolutely incumbent upon themselves to take the party to task for his conception, his belief, his action, or whatever. That isn't what God says, whatsoever. What God said is that we had better face up to our responsibilities.

It is the ministry's responsibility to preach God's Truth, and I don't think we have faltered in that. Certainly, I have tried with everything that is within me, and as powerfully as I know how. But it isn't my responsibility, then, in relationship to every one of you, to constantly berate, criticize and censure you. It is now my responsibility to live those spiritual principles that are right: love, compassion and understanding—understanding meaning that I know what they are going through; I know their frame, because I know what is going on in my life—I know the struggles that I'm going through. It makes me very compassionate for others. But, you know, if I turn around and I see myself in a false image—that is, if I see myself as a perfect entity; I've got the world by the tail—do you know how I'm going to judge others? Critically and crucially, in exactly the same way that I view myself on the other side: I think I have it, and I think they don't. That is not what God wants of us. God wants us to see ourselves for what we are, and to understand why we think like we do; why we behave like we do; and why we need to abhor the self, because we have come to recognize our own innate weaknesses, our deficiencies and our lacks. And, you know, when you begin to see that, you have an enormous amount of compassion for somebody else.

Is it any wonder, then, that Christ was moved with tears when He looked at people who were criminally inclined and wanted to destroy Him? The very ones that wanted to destroy Jesus Christ, He shed tears for them. I don't see too many human beings doing that today. When He said, "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How many times I would have gathered you as a mother hen does her chicks, but you wouldn't have me."

Or, think of the marvelous example of Stephen at the very moment he said, "Father, forgive them." Here they were, they were going to throw stones at him, but he looked up and said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."

And yet, it seems that the "stronger" we become in our own eyes, the more critical we become of others. That must be some form of self-righteousness, because it's not acceptable in the eyes of God, whatsoever. For, the stronger we are, the greater the indication of our distaste for self. That's the actual equation.

So, the faith level, then, is going to be determined by our individual actions—how we react to others. If we are constantly clobbering others; if we are constantly agitating; if we are constantly questioning; if we are constantly adverse in our whole demeanor and our whole character, that's not of God. Not at all. I'll tell you, if we can just bury the self, completely, we will have made a whole lot more progress than if we have all the doctrine, and all of the Word of God, and all prophecy, and we have it down perfectly, because, if that is the case, we have not achieved anything—all that could be just surface knowledge. But if you change the character, you have made one giant step, and how marvelous that step is in the sight of God.

1 Timothy 6 and verse 12. 1 Timothy 6 and noting verse 12. Here Paul, writing to Timothy said: "Fight the good fight of faith." Well, I wonder why the Apostle Paul seems to keep talking all the time about the necessity of building up this faith? If it is such an easy and such a casual thing, why do I get the impression that the maintenance of faith is one of the most difficult things on the face of this earth? Not only do I get the impression, I get a strong emotional feeling, now, because I've gone through it. I know what it is, and I know how difficult it is. Because it would be so much more to the liking of any mortal man to go along, just for the sake of conformity, and not to appear to be obstinate. Remember where we read that to us it is the evident token of our salvation? To them it is the evident token of perdition—obstinacy, hatefulness. That's what they are saying—that's what they are telling others that you are. They believe that you are nothing but obstinate—you are stubborn, and you are rebellious. But to you, as the Apostle Paul said, it is the evident token of salvation.

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." It's a personal relationship—it is something that you and I must do. We lay hold on eternal life. What is eternal life? The Word of God—they are the words of life. Then, let's lay hold of that Word of Life, which means, let's do it with all the aggressiveness, and the purpose, and the determination that we can muster. And that will stand us in good stead. We must will it.

Now, that doesn't mean that we can do it on our own, I understand that. There is no way that I, with all the determination that exists within this physical life, could ever live the Truth of God. That I long ago learned, not only because of what I was instructed by the original Faith, but also by my own personal

evaluation. I couldn't do it, but I must *will* it—I must *will* to let the mind of Jesus Christ be within me, I must *will* to effect the mastery in my life. And once I have willed it and purposed it, Jesus Christ will do it. But the results are one and the same. It would appear that I have done it. It doesn't mean that they are not going to be done. The actual results are the living of those truths of God. We are going to see them manifested in our lives—it isn't a matter of kidding or deluding ourselves, whatsoever. It will come to pass—there will be a change in our lives.

So, he said, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." Let us come to grips with the realities of life; let us come to grips with those things that are the very essence of life. "[L]ay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called." We have been called, brethren. I have said so many, many times that I know that I am addressing the children of God, and I don't forget that. I don't care which one it is, I don't care how I may humanly view some other person. When I remember that everyone under the hearing of my voice is a called child of God, I treat him with a lot more respect. If I tend to lose that, and I begin to think of my human relationships with them—I'm a minister, and they are this, or they are something else, or whatever it may be—I may begin to treat them in a shoddy fashion that is not acceptable in the sight of God. But if we can only remember that we are talking to the children of God, then we will be compassionate, and merciful, and kind. And that is absolutely necessary. They are God's children, and I'm not sure how God is going to look down upon His stewards who have treated those children in some shoddy way. But at the same time, those children must not be bratty. In other words, God has given us the license and the responsibility to preach that Way of Life, and to teach it, and then to manifest all the love and the affection possible. It is absolutely necessary.

"[W]hereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." God has called you, brethren. He delivered to you initially the Faith—you heard it through the Gospel. It is the very Way of Life you have used to evaluate your lives—it is the standard of your daily evaluation—and you must continue to evaluate your lives on that very basis. And it is by that standard that you can keep yourselves out of a questioning spirit, which is a wretched disease.

We are not unmindful of the ways of God. If you were called, God gave it to you. Remember, we already read that? If God called you, and you have Jesus

Christ—unless you have become reprobate—then you have Christ, and if you have Christ, then you were given the original Faith. You know what it is. Then hang on to it—be faithful, be obedient. And let's effect in our lives the required changes that are in accord with that Faith. Contend for the Faith that was originally delivered to us. It is a matter of contending against our minds, our emotions, and the lustful spirit that resides within us, which lusts to envy. God says we must come to grips with these things. We must control them, and we must use as a standard that Faith that God originally gave to us, and effect that kind of mastery in our lives. And the net result of that is going to be oneness. It is going to be love, and affection, and regard, and understanding for one another that has never existed to that level before. It can be done, brethren. Will we stand awesomely supreme and tall in the powers of God's Spirit—in the purpose of that Faith, in the will of God in our lives? If we have willed it so, it can happen, and *the* Faith will be abundantly manifested in our daily activities.

Next time, brethren, we're going to get into the next fundamental concept—subtopic: "Continuity of the Faith stands in doubt in the last days."