

Christian Living Series 2, sermon # 99 The Fruits of God's Holy Spirit

Faith #8

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Edited Sermon Transcript

Greetings, brethren. This is a continuation of the long series on the fruits of God's Holy Spirit and particularly, now, we are covering the fruit of faith, which is a rather interesting and diverse fruit of God's Spirit.

In the past, we covered such Hebrew words as *ehmoon*, which, of course, is the masculine form of a basic Hebrew word, and *ehmoonah*, which is the feminine form of that word. The base or root word is *ahman*, which we have just come to. That is, we covered just a brief part of it last time, and we are going to continue with it now in the second category, or subtitle, that I have given to it, as I have worked out this outline.

If you will recall, the definition of *ahman*, once again: As a primitive root it properly means "to build up or support; to foster as a parent or nurse; figuratively to render (or be) firm or faithful [that is, to be stable and absolute, unmovable], to trust or believe . . ." It is just like something that is firm—let's say like a deck, or the foundation of a house, or something you are standing on. If it is firm, you have confidence in it and your confidence is predicated on the fact that it isn't going to shift, it isn't going to move—it is absolute, it is firm. Well, it has a psychological meaning that is comparable to what it means in those physical circumstances. It means to trust, or to believe, or to have confidence in.

". . . to be permanent or quiet [that is, it isn't always shaking]; morally to be true or certain." And it's used in a very, very broad manner in the Bible as "assurance, believe, bring up, establish, [to] be faithful," or as we are going to see later on, "of long continuance." The plagues and difficulties that human beings experience are tenacious—they cling right there because of the attitude or the nature of the human beings involved.

It also means to be steadfast, or to be sure, or to be trustworthy or that which is verifiable.

Now, the first sub-topic under the Hebrew word *ahman* was simply a matter of some examples of obedience. And so we went through a number of them, showing why God pronounced these people as worthy servants: because they were stable, they were firm, they were unmovable in their conviction—they wouldn't change. They were absolute and they were firm in their resolve. The Truth that God gave to them, they held on to. They firmly believed it. Moses never assumed, nor arrogated to himself any responsibility of saying, "Well, it's my province to decide whether it's this, or it's something else." Moses merely received the Word of God and then he pronounced it exactly as God gave it to him, and he did so on the basis of faith—he believed it, he trusted it, he knew it.

We have come now to that second broad category, or sub-topic, under the basic word *ahman*, and the title that I have given to it is, "Men generally turn from Truth to base traits." It is amazing how human beings can start off acceptably, but it is another story altogether for them to remain true to faith from start to finish. They oftentimes get into the configuration in which they want to redesign, reevaluate, things for themselves. They begin to look at it, and as they look at it and evaluate it, they begin to apply human rationalization—the powers of their own minds. And the powers of one's own mind are directly influenced by the lustful appetites with which he is born naturally. If we cannot divest ourselves of this very nature—these very traits and characteristics—every probability is that we are going to alter or change that which has been delivered to us on the basis of our own input. And human beings do that.

You know, when you are handed something, invariably the human trait is to want to look at it and censor it or correct it. Now, it doesn't mean that, humanly, that is always wrong. What I am trying to point out is that even when we are given something directly from God, we want to alter it and change it in accord with our own dictates—our own feelings. And we evaluate circumstances, we evaluate even the doctrine, or Truth that is given, on the basis of conditions and circumstances which apply in our lives, and we restructure those conditions to satisfy our whims—to satisfy the dictates of our own natural minds—because we want it to come out our way. Oh, I see it every day. The worst part of it is that I see it in my own life, too, and I have to fight it just as hard as any of the rest of you

have to fight it. It's a common tendency to want to alter and change in some way in order to satisfy the whim of a natural mind, and we just automatically do it.

So, men, then, generally turn from Truth to base traits. Now, we are not going to comprehend that significant statement if we do not understand the fact that the nature, the natural mind, with which we were born—albeit appearing to be so right—is evil. Who in the world ever thought that he was doing something wrong and deliberately set out to do it wrong? No, that isn't the reasoning behind his divisiveness at all. The reasoning behind it is that it seems to be right to him. Isn't that what the Bible says? There is a way which *seems* to be right. Sure, it always seems to be right, but you cannot trust the natural mind. That is the point that I want to get across to all of us. You simply cannot trust that mind.

Now, anytime there are divisive circumstances, or divisive thoughts or concepts, that arise in our minds, that would generate strife or defiance against that which is proclaimed, or is contrary to acceptable Truth which has been given to us, we need to step back a second time and say, "Wait a minute, even though it seems right to me, is it contrary to that which has been delivered?" The only way you are going to be able to evaluate in the first place, is if God has originally given you the Truth. You cannot go out and obtain the Truth by your own powers or your own mental ability. It is not possible. To understand Truth is a gift of God's Spirit and you will never understand it from a spiritual perspective until it has been given. Oh, I'm not talking about the letter application. Anybody can pick up the Bible, or perhaps something else, and read the letter responsibility of keeping the Sabbath if they want to do it. But that doesn't mean that they are going to keep it in accord with the spiritual intent or purpose whatsoever. You cannot do that until that mind has been changed—until the very mind of the Spirit is given. And then, as we are told, that mind can know all things. In no other way can you grasp it or understand it.

So, man will never know the Truth, and will never be able to see and comprehend his own nature, without first receiving a spiritual revelation—two of them in fact: First, the revelation of what he is, when his mind is stripped of all of the camouflage, all of the darkness that enshrouds it, so that it can perfectly see what its own nature and its own proclivity is. And then secondly, it can see the divinely-inspired Truth of God. You cannot do it otherwise. But men who do not remain aware of those two factors will very shortly begin to argue, and begin to

apply natural reasoning, and will depart from God's Truth just as surely as tomorrow's sun will arise. It is an inevitable thing if we do not recognize our weaknesses and the necessity of trusting implicitly the divinely-revealed Truth. And it takes faith to do that. And faith is undergirded by that very basic principle: the absolute Truth. That's why frequently in the Bible, the very word used for "truth" is the same word that is translated as "faith." Oftentimes it is exactly the same word.

So we are talking, then, about fruits of God's Holy Spirit. And God's Law is spiritual. So, then, the fruits that are borne are fruits of that Law—the words of God. They are Spirit and they are life. And so we find that undergirding that Word is faith and confidence in it. That is, knowing that it is absolute—that it has come from God, and that it is unalterable and cannot be changed. The people who are truly called of God have been given the Truth of God as a divine beneficence of God, and then the responsibility incumbent upon those people is to retain it in faith—faithfulness. That is, undergirding it with absolute conviction despite how our natural minds may want to warp, pervert, corrupt or twist. We have all those proclivities and it is only by recognizing both of those characteristics that we, ourselves, can remain true and faithful to God.

So, men, generally, turn from Truth to base traits. It's just a natural thing, and every one of us has that same proclivity written within his makeup. Every single one. If we are not careful, and if we do not recognize it, what we will do is to sit down and we will begin to reevaluate subjects; we are going to reevaluate doctrines; we are going to reevaluate concepts; and we are going to come up with a lot of technical explanations. And what we are going to do is to depart from a divinely-revealed Way. It's just that easy.

Alright, let's begin to notice a few texts in this regard: Men, generally, begin to turn from Truth to base traits. Here in Psalms the twelfth chapter, beginning in verse one, and let's emphasize verse one. Psalm 12:1: "Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth." Why do they cease? Number one is that godly men don't remain godly. They are troubled, perplexed and bewildered by their surroundings, by peer pressure, by circumstances, and by events in their lives. In other words, it doesn't take too long until jobs and other circumstances, whatever they may be, cause them to turn their heads. ". . . for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." What a statement.

"The faithful," that is, those whose feet are down—who could not be changed by circumstance, by dint, or by powers.

Or, as the Apostle Paul said here in Romans the eighth chapter—and this has always impressed me. Here in Romans 8, if you will notice it beginning in verse 35: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" What is the love of Christ but the Truth? "[S]hall tribulation[?]" Will a sword? Will the ridicule and the abuse of relatives, friends, or neighbors? ". . . or distress [that is, mental perplexity], or persecution . . ." When somebody is going to ridicule you and say all manner of evil against you because of that which you believe. When they are going to hold you in absolute contempt. Will that turn you? ". . . or famine . . ." What if you are facing a dearth—a real problem concerning the necessary food of life? Famine. Would you die for God's Truth rather than give it up? Or would you say, "Well, wait a minute, God's promise is to provide." And we begin to pervert the Scripture, not recognizing the responsibility of some of these things incumbent upon us. And so we begin to rationalize: "Well, if I am led to this point, it certainly cannot be the Truth." And that's what most people have done with the Truth in times past.

Will famine? What if you are standing there and it looks like you are going to die unless you submit and change, or alter, the Truth? Or will you say, like Job said: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him"? You know, Isaiah could have looked at it when he was put in the hollow of that log, and as he heard the teeth of that saw going back and forth across the log, knowing that inevitably it was going to begin to tear into his flesh—when he was cut in two, right down the middle—and said at that moment, "Well, wait a minute, there must not be anything to this. Surely, God, with all of His power in heaven, could stop that at any moment." But He didn't, did He?

What about Stephen? Here was a marvelous individual—young Stephen—obviously in his late twenties, and yet, they stoned him. And he could have looked at it and said, "I don't understand this. Here God has all power in heaven and earth, and He is letting these people do this." You know, God may allow some of us to go through those circumstances. Are we equipped? Do we really believe God's Truth that strongly? Is there anything that could separate us?

". . . or famine, or nakedness, or peril . . ." You are out at sea; you're in a tornado; you're in some terrifying circumstance; would you lose your orientation

at that moment? ". . . or sword?" War. "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yes, that is the station we have assumed, because this world hates God's Truth and God may allow us to pay the ultimate price because He wants to test our absolute faith, that is, our love for that Truth. Do we really believe it? And would we rather—as Job said—be slain than to give it up?

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Why not count on the life of Christ in you to stir you up with that kind of faith and that kind of resolve? We need more of that, brethren, than we need a lot of scholarship. I'll tell you what is going to help most of you more than anything is to get on those knees and to call out to God for the power of that faith and that solidarity of conviction in life. It is *far* more meaningful—and I mean *far* more meaningful—than to have all the knowledge in heaven and in earth, because that knowledge is not going to do you that much good. It's a form of human arrogance, as the Bible makes very clear. But, I'll tell you, when those hearts and those minds are developed in faith and in confidence, that is worth the price of this universe. That's what God wants. Do we have that faith? That's what I am talking about. And that faith is the underscoring of Truth itself because it is exactly the same word. It means that our faith is predicated on that form of doctrine that was delivered to us and we would rather die than to give it up—to change or to alter it in any way.

So, going back, now, to Psalms the twelfth chapter, he said: "Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth." David looked out and he found men that were sunshine Christians. They all did well when everything went well, but the minute they ran into problems, they turned tail and ran. ". . . for the faithful fail from among the children of men." And I'll tell you, we have come dangerously close to that situation today.

". . . for the faithful fail from among the children of men." They will follow a man; they will follow an organization; they will follow physical circumstances, but they won't follow the Truth of God—they won't walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. And Christ said, "I am the Truth, and the Way, and the Resurrection."

"They speak vanity every one with his neighbour." That is, they are talking out of the arrogance of their own minds—the way that seems right to

them. ". . . with flattering lips [they use a lot of flattering terminology] and with a double heart do they speak." You see, they departed from God's Truth: "the faithful fail"—that is, the Truth seekers fail, the obedient ones that live in that faith and that confidence fail. And then what do they do? "They speak vanity." Well, what is vanity but the arrogance of a human mind? And knowledge creates that vanity. "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak." Now, they probably don't realize it, but they are not to be trusted because they will make a statement today that they will reverse tomorrow. You cannot trust it. That's what we are talking about: the development of the kind of nature that is implicitly and absolutely trustworthy. I don't mean situation ethics—that which is applicable today versus that which was applicable yesterday. I am talking about that which is the same, yesterday, today and forever. And that is what we must gain and take hold of.

"The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips . . ." If we go ahead and proceed in that way of life, we are going to be cut off just as surely as the statement of God—it is an inevitable consideration. ". . . and the tongue that speaketh proud things." Why do they speak proud things? Let's not give our own interpretation to it. What does God say these proud things are? Well, they are the very things in Proverbs 6, if you will remember, and what is it, verse 19? The things that proceed out of the hearts and minds of man. Remember the seventh chapter of Mark? Evil things that proceed right out of the heart of man—the corrupt men. ". . . and the tongue that speaketh proud things." The things that proceed from the natural minds and the natural hearts.

"Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail." With our tongue. That is, with the eloquence of their language—the brilliance of their arguments. Or, you can go to the other extreme: with the cleverness—the hatefulness—"of our tongues will we prevail." How many times do you hear people make the statement: "I'll verbally chew them up alive"? Well, here is your example of this. "Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail." That is, "We will make mincemeat out of them."

". . . our lips are our own." I have authority over my mind and my heart and over what I say. Yes, momentarily. But what about tomorrow? "[W]ho is lord over us?" You see, David here was trying—apparently through speaking, or example, or whatever—to make these people see what they were doing to

themselves. And his heart was right. He gained the approval of God; what else could you ask for? And, yet, in the final analysis, these same people that were being influenced by David, turned around and said, "Our lips are our own. We will say what we please. Nobody is lord over us. We make our own decisions." Now, of course, what they were doing was castigating David. They didn't directly castigate God. But, of course, indirectly, that is exactly what they were doing. But do you know of anybody today who claims (well, there are some today who do claim) to be Christian—anybody in that category—who really believes he is castigating God and Christ? No, he thinks it's just the conviction of somebody else. That's the cleverness of human minds and human hearts.

So, the faithful fail—they cannot remain true. If they fail, it means that they turned away from it. Yes, they can die because they can be cut off, but in that sense, the faithful have not failed, they have really been successful. They endured all the way to the end. How much more successful can you make them? So, they didn't fail at all, they merely were cut down short of their natural lives. That's all. We are talking about people who turn. That is, those who do not believe and who do not have the confidence in that which was given to them in order to endure and hang on all the way to the conclusion of their lives.

Next, let's notice Isaiah 1 and verse 21. Isaiah 1, and noting verse 21. Here we read: "How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers." Look at that. Here is a city that bore the Truth of God—Jerusalem. They had it. "How is the faithful [that is, the Truth-abiding] city [the city that became the capital of my Way of Life] become an harlot!" Jerusalem—where the priests of God lodged; where the very kings that God set up lodged; where the very prophets lived. How is that city become an harlot? One has to wonder how, once you have the absolute Truth of God, you can ever turn away from it, except that those human beings begin to trust in their natural minds. Oh, I don't believe for one minute that they looked at it and said, "Yes, I know the Way of God, but I've decided that I want to go the way of a human being." That isn't what they did at all. We delude ourselves when we consider that type of thing. They still thought they were doing the right thing. Even in perversion and corruption, natural minds believe that they are still doing the right thing. They think it is right. But there is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is the way of death.

"[I]t was full of judgment," he said, "righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers." It is amazing how quickly truth will fail—how quickly people will turn away from the Truth of God.

In Jeremiah 42. The next text, now. Jeremiah 42, and let's note verse 5, but let's go back and begin with verse 1. Jeremiah 42, and beginning in verse 1:

Then all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshai, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near, And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God . . .

Now, can you notice something here? Notice it was, "*thy* God," not "*our* God." In other words, they were coming to him and saying, "Our god is different from your God. But, Jeremiah, we know that you have some kind of recourse with your God. Would you pray for us?" How many times will people do that today? "Well, we believe in a different God, but would you pray for me?" Well, there is only one God—only one God. The rest of them must be false, then.

. . . pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us;) That the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do. Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard you; behold, I will pray unto the LORD your God . . .

Now, Jeremiah turned it all the way around. "I will pray unto the Lord *your* God." You see, they came and said, "Would you go to *your* God," and Jeremiah turned around and said, "I'll pray to the Lord *your* God."

. . . according to your words; and it shall come to pass, that whatsoever thing the LORD shall answer you, I will declare it unto you; I will keep nothing back from you. Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us . . .

The Lord be a true and *faithful* witness. That is, He is a God of Truth between us. ". . . if we do not even according to all things for the which the

LORD *thy* God [now they went right back and they forgot that He was their God also] shall send thee to us." And what did they do? The minute Jeremiah came back and told them what the story was, they said, "That isn't from God at all. You've conjured this up in your own mind and now you expect us to follow what *you* dictate." How perverse and how indifferent human beings can be. They wanted Jeremiah to pray—they recognized certain things—but then they didn't want to live up to it. They still wanted to proceed on the basis of their own interpretation—what they thought was right. And this regarded their going down into Egypt, and Jeremiah said, "No, you stay right here because God said you are going to be blessed if you stay right here. Don't you go to Egypt—don't you trust in them." And then they accused Jeremiah of lying—that it wasn't the word of God at all. So they went down into Egypt, and every man, woman and child was killed.

Men cannot be faithful. They just will not hang on to that which they have been given. They will come up with some kind of weird explanation; and they will rationalize it; and they will think it through on their own; and they are going to follow the dictates of their own minds. That is not the purpose of God's Truth. God's Truth has to be revealed to us. It doesn't come because of any natural ability on our part. It comes because God gives it to us. We respond favorably, emotionally, and in an excited, enthusiastic way because of a welling up of that very Way within us. We respond and are baptized on that very basis, but as we begin to progress in the responsibility of life, we allow more and more of our natural minds to begin to take over progressively. We begin to want to seek out proofs, and there is no place in all of the Bible that speaks directly of proving God's Truth in the sense of determining whether it is Truth or whether it isn't. Because human beings cannot do that. What we do is to prove its value. It's like the expression there in the book of Luke where it says, "I am going out to prove my oxen." It's the same word. Now, what was he doing? Proving whether or not they were oxen? Or was he testing them on the basis of the contract of sale? In other words, "These are good oxen. They will do so and so, or whatever. They will live up to certain expectations." The word "prove" in the Bible means to live it and to derive the benefit therefrom. It does not mean anything else.

When we are asked to prove God, what does that mean? To prove whether or not He *is* God? How in the world can I prove whether or not He is God? I can only "prove" by living the example—living up to it; living the responsibility. And then I see the results, because they are fulfilled in my life.

So, people immediately want to reevaluate what God delivers to them, and they oftentimes justify it because they say, "Well, I don't know whether that is from God or not. You know, those could be your own words." Well, in the first place, we have to recognize the Truth that God gives to us initially, and then, on the basis of that Truth which we originally received, we are able to evaluate the servants of God. Yes, we have a responsibility. But the responsibility is not for you to pick up the Bible and to use your own rationalization, but to use the Truth that God Almighty gave. And that *must* be the basis of determining who the true servants of God are. And you *do* have that responsibility—every one of us bears that. But it is not predicated upon what *we* think we see out of the Word. It is predicated upon what God Almighty gave to us, and the very premise for which we were baptized. We *must* hang on to that or otherwise we don't have anything. And that is how the Way of Life is evaluated. Scholars are not given a very high mark in the eyes of God. Remember Timothy?

Next, I want us to turn to Hosea 11 and verse 12. Hosea 11 and let's note verse 12. Here Hosea had something to say about faithfulness:

Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.

Judah remained faithful for a period of time, but it wasn't long—if you will remember the twenty-third chapter of Second Kings—until Judah also departed. But Judah remained faithful for a period of time. They had far more kings over in Judah that did remain faithful than they had over in Israel. Israel departed from the time of Jeroboam, and it is doubtful if there was a single king that manifested any real acceptable traits or character over in Israel. But in Judah they had several that were faithful. Hezekiah, Josiah, and even Manasseh finally turned around and did that which was right in the sight of God. "Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints." And, yet, what happened to Judah? You see, here was Judah, at this particular point—and we are going to see this in the series on the "History of God's Dealing With Man" and begin to realize some of this in relationship to time—when Hosea was one of the prophets. And when we see the time element there, then we will begin to understand when Hosea prophesied and to whom. So it will become very clear. "But Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the saints" in the time that Hosea was inspired to prophesy. Yet, as I said, in Second Kings the twenty-third chapter, where the overall evaluation was

rendered, both Judah and Israel had departed. So what does it mean? Judah didn't remain faithful. Here she had it and yet could not remain faithful.

Psalms 106 and let's note verse 12. Psalms 106, and noting verse 12: "Then believed they his words; they sang his praise." The word "believed" is the word *ahman*, which is the word for "truth." Absolute belief is predicated on absolutes, because it is a confidence. It is not a situational type of thing where, "Well, I accept it today, but what I accept tomorrow is something else." Acceptance is one thing, but belief is something else. Belief is an ingredient of absoluteness; it is a confidence; it is an assurance; you know it. And so we find here, "Then believed they his words." Let's go back to the beginning of this in verse 9:

He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left.

And what was the response of Israel at that very moment? Well, it's characteristic of all of us. At that moment it was: "Oh, it's marvelous to be one of God's." But three minutes later, when that test was all over and they were confronted with something else, they forgot Him totally. So, at that particular moment, Israel *believed* His words. They had confidence in the Truth of God. "They sang his praise." But, verse 13: "They soon forgot his works."

Are human beings any different today? Aren't they the same human beings with the same nature? The only thing that is going to keep them alive and faithful today is if that Spirit is kept active and alive within their lives. That's the only difference. It is a matter of faith, but we are going to come to that. In fact, at this particular point I would just like to take a moment and read again Hebrews 4, verses 1 and 2, which I have read so many times before. Hebrews 4, verses 1 and 2:

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

Why? Why would anybody who has been given God's Truth—which is more priceless than gold, more priceless than all of the possessions of this world,

more priceless than all of the physical universe combined—turn away from it? But God says:

. . . lest . . . any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them [that is, Israel, these people mentioned here in Psalm 106:12], *not being mixed with faith* . . .

They didn't hang on to it because they didn't have any faith. But they had been given God's Truth. Today we have been given God's Truth and yet the vast majority didn't hang on to it either. And here was a situation in which there was every likelihood they were going to turn away from it. ". . . lest . . . any of you should seem to come short of it." That is, that they would falter; that they would fail; that they would not realize their true objective; that they would not endure to the end; that they would not have faith and confidence in that which had been given to them. But rather, on the basis of physical circumstances and their own emotions, they would begin to evaluate those conditions and circumstances. And that's what people have been doing. And we are no different, brethren. We will do exactly the same thing in a different way—a different avenue—if we are not real careful. But when circumstances arose within the Body in the last days, they began to evaluate. And, on the basis of those conditions and those circumstances, what they did was to evaluate the Truth of God—they *re*-evaluated it and they rejected it. That's right. They rejected it exactly as the Bible says: "That day cannot come except there come an apostasy"—that is, a falling away. Or, as the Apostle Paul more clearly stated it, they would reject the doctrine. Remember, that's what he said in Timothy. So they did reject that doctrine exactly as God said.

So here, then, we find in Psalms 106 and verse 12: "Then they believed." That is, right on the heels of a great and awesome miracle, they would believe. But they had no continuity. They couldn't weather the storm of any trial or unique experience. The only time that they could remain faithful was in a state of euphoria—some great thing would happen to them. You know, God would let something shine out of heaven, or there was a powerful intervention, or some great miracle, or something else, and they would hang on. But is God going to have to perform miracles for all eternity to keep people faithful? Or are we finally going to learn to have faith in God regardless of circumstances? You see, that's what

God wants to know, and that is the very reason for what is written in Hebrews the twelfth chapter: that it is necessary for us to go through trials and experiences which will "afterward yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness." So, on the heels of a great miracle:

Then believed they his words; they sang his praise. [But] they soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel.

They soon forgot it. They set it aside and turned to their own natural lusts. Verse 14: "But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert." They tried Him; they put Him through all kinds of experiences. Why? Because they didn't believe; because they didn't trust; because they could not accept the absoluteness of God's Truth.

You see, the word "believed" is from that root word which means "truth." How can I believe in a wind storm? I only believe in its reality. But there is no permanency, because it is here today and gone tomorrow. But we are talking about something that remains absolute, though unseen: God's Truth. We know it; we believe it; it is not subject to tangible proof; it is a matter of faith, and faith is the evidence of things which are not seen. And we believe it and know that it has been given to us, and we *refuse* to turn away from it, just exactly as God Almighty gave the Truth to our forefathers, Israel, and then required them to walk in that Way of Life. But they did not, because of the lack of faith. Faith has been provided today as a gift of God's Holy Spirit. It is a fruit of God's Holy Spirit that, if we possess it, will keep us from doing exactly the same thing that ancient Israel did. And what did they do? They received the Truth and then soon forgot God—they turned away from Him to their own natural lusts, to their own inclinations, to their own mental rationalizations. And God does not want us to do that. God wants us to be faithful and to have that kind of control over our lives, brethren.

God has called us; God gave us that knowledge; God made you His children. I don't know what greater comment could be made—what greater recognition could be given to you—than the fact that God Almighty has made you His sons and His daughters. But what you do with it now is your responsibility. But it means, brethren, that you are going to have to come to grips with those natural minds and those natural hearts, and you are going to have to *refuse* to

allow your own inclinations, your own natural rationalizations, to pull you away from God's Truth. Rather, you are going to remain tall and steady in that Way of Life and refuse to turn from it.

Now let's notice Jeremiah the twelfth chapter. Jeremiah 12 and noticing verse 6, but we are going to read verses 5 through 13. Jeremiah 12, beginning in verse 5. And here Jeremiah, speaking on this same subject said:

If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan? [In other words, if you have run up against problems and you falter, how are you going to handle future difficulties and problems?] For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee.

You see, they sat there and they rationalized. And it is so easy for us to sit and to rationalize all of these historical events, and as we project our minds back and see these people back there deliberately sitting and figuring out how they are going to consciously reject God, we somehow put them in the dark, deep, aboriginal class. But they were more intelligent than we. They had much better character than we, because Jeremiah said that we have been dissipating and going downhill since that day forward. So, they had more character than we, and yet *they* failed. But here was the rationalization that went on in their minds:

. . . they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.

Believe them not—don't trust in those words. Why would Jeremiah speak, in the words of God: "Don't trust in those words"? Because they had already been given the words of God. That's the reason. If what they are saying is contrary to the words that God made known through Jeremiah, He said, "Don't believe them—don't accept them."

Well, my dear brethren, you and I had a servant in the last days. And it doesn't matter what happened to that servant. Let's forget that. Let's forget about

what the nature was and all of the other things that may have happened. What I am saying is that God Almighty *spoke* through that man and He made His Truth known in the last days. Unfortunately, as the Bible says, he didn't remain faithful to it because he did not hang on to that which was originally given. ". . . believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee." Yes, they sound judicious; they sound acceptable; they make sense to the human mind: "fair words." They seem so logical, but that doesn't mean that they are the Truth, at all.

"I have forsaken mine house . . ." God said, "I don't care what they come and tell you—what kind of logic and rationalization they use. I've told you before that I have already forsaken my house. It's finished. It's over."

I have left mine heritage [they are now going to reap the consequence]; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies. Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it. Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her; come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour. Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard . . .

The very ones ordained by God. These weren't Gentiles from these Canaanitish peoples, or from Moab, or from someplace else, that came over into Israel. These were the very priests—the very servants of God—over in Israel. And they turned contemptuous.

Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.

People that were given God's Truth, and yet, they sat there, and as they heard the perversions of these pastors, they turned sour—they turned to corruption and perversion. They listened to it, and the people allowed themselves to be led in that very path. Now, can we blame the pastors altogether? Oh, yes, we can blame them because they are accountable, but what about the people? You see, they bore a responsibility too. God said, "I want you to check, and I want you to know that I have revealed the Truth and it is absolutely unalterable. I have made it known to you. And if anybody comes to you and says that something else is the Truth, believe him not. Don't subscribe to it."

Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness [look what they have produced]. They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto me; the whole land is made desolate [Here was the end result of a departure from God's Truth. Oh, have we seen that kind of tragedy today?], because no man layeth it to heart [No man is asking why. No man will take the time to ask, 'Why is all of this happening?' No man layeth it to heart]. The spoilers are come upon all high places through the wilderness: for the sword of the LORD shall devour from the one end of the land even to the other end of the land: no flesh shall have peace.

We are going on in these chaotic circumstances today, and yet people will not lay it to heart. They will not back up momentarily and ask, "Why?" Brethren, the reason for the difficulties of the body that departed—those outside—is that they have separated from it and they are not asking why they are experiencing the adversities that they are.

But, brethren, let's not exclude ourselves, because perhaps we are not living up to everything we should and are allowing too many rationalizations to proceed from our own minds and our own hearts. We must be faithful to that Truth which God gave to us. Let's hang on to it. That is of more value than anything else. It's easy for us to sit down and use a scholarly approach and begin to reject this, and to reject that, and reject something else, but let's hang on to God's Truth and be faithful to it.

They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns: they have put themselves to pain, but shall not profit: and they shall be ashamed of your revenues because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

And, remember, there is a fierce anger of God that is being experienced by human beings today who have departed from God's Truth.

Next time, brethren, we want to get into something that is a little more optimistic and we want to begin point number three: "The benefits of a genuine love for Truth." We will wait for that until next time.