

Faith Comes

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Romans 10:12-21

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” 14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!” 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” 17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. 18 But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: “Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world.” 19 But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: “I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.” 20 But Isaiah is very bold and says: “I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.” 21 But to Israel he says: “All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people.”

Before we examine and benefit from our text, let us rehearse some very fundamental and important facts about faith. The first fact is that everyone exercises faith on a daily basis. It doesn't matter if you're a Christian or not, you possess faith and use it every day. Only Christians can act in faith toward God, and not all Christians do so consistently. But all people have faith and use it daily. The Bible tells us, “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD” (Jeremiah 17:5). This verse clearly proves that the unrighteous have faith, but they put it in man and not the Lord. The Bible also warns, “Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help” (Psalms 146:3). And to the wealthy believers, tempted to exercise faith in their wealth, the Bible commands, “Not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17). All of these verses tell us that all people have faith and that Christians, you and I, can put our faith in the wrong things.

The question we need to ask and answer today is where does faith come from and how do we know what is the Lord wants us to believe Him for?

I. Faith Comes Through the Word of God

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17)

A. The Apostle Paul Demonstrates Human Hearing is Not Enough.

It is not enough to hear the word of God. Paul is not just using the audio sensory of the body, he's talking about any way you bring to the mind the word of God, whether by reading or hearing it. Human perception is not enough. That alone does not produce faith.

Paul demonstrates for us in an antithesis illustration. It's contrary to faith in order to show us that faith comes by divine illumination.

B. The Apostle Paul Demonstrates Divine Illumination is Required.

Let's look at the text here. He begins in verses 12-15 stating there is no bias or prejudice with God but that God is rich to all no matter what your ethnicity or religious background, He is rich to all and no matter who calls on the name of the Lord, they will be saved. There's no exceptional clause here. If you call upon the name of the Lord, you will be saved. However, in the next verse he qualifies what he means by it.

“How shall they call on Him whom they have not believed?”

Paul is stating here that those who are saved, when they call upon the Lord, are those who call in faith. It's not just praying a prayer. It's not just saying, “Dear Jesus, forgive me of my sins, come into my life. In Your name I pray. Amen.” Or crying out, “Oh God, save me.” It's a call based upon faith. You cannot call upon the Lord in faith unless you've heard.

“How shall they believe upon Him whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they hear unless they are sent?”

Then in verse 16 he sounds a discordant note. They have not all obeyed the Gospel who have heard. Not everyone who has heard believes. How is that possible? He says in verse 17 that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. How is it possible? What Paul is wanting to demonstrate to you is that divine illumination is required. It's more than just hearing a Gospel message or reading a Gospel tract. They have not all obeyed the Gospel.

Once again, Paul clearly delineates for this modern generation what he means by calling upon the Lord in faith. To call upon the Lord in faith is to obey. Do you see that in verse 16? Not everyone who has heard obeys the Gospel. Paul clearly shows us that not everybody who hears the Gospel is saved, only those who, in faith, call upon the Lord, and those who do that obey the Lord.

It goes back to our definition of faith. What is faith in God? Faith in God is seeing reality as God sees it and acting like it's true. That's what faith is. It's seeing and acting what you believe to be real. Therefore, when the Gospel call comes, when you hear the Gospel and respond by faith, that faith in that Gospel will lead to transformation. Your life will not stay the same. It can't continue as it always has up to that point. You believe what you heard to be true therefore you act like it's true.

Faith that does not produce obedience to the Gospel is not saving faith. You can't simply say, "God help me, I believe in You." Your faith must have corresponding actions. This is faith that James chapter two speaks of, a faith accompanied by works.

The key to understanding Paul's explanation of faith is laid out before us with ancient Israel. They all heard but they did not all obey the Gospel. Look at what he continues to say in verse 16.

"For Isaiah said, 'Lord, who has believed our report?'"

"Who has believed our message? I've preached exactly what You wanted me to say but nobody is believing it. Just give me one, Lord. There is none. Of all my hearers, I can't find one who has believed."

"Have they not heard? Yes indeed."

Paul says they have all heard through natural revelation (10:18).

"But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: 'Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world.'"

Nature. There is no place in which that message is not heard. They have natural revelation, but God gave them even more. He gave them supernatural revelation through His prophets.

But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation."

Moses was talking about the Gentiles. "You haven't believed what I've said about you, so God is going to spur you on to believe Me by blessing Gentiles. Then He says Isaiah was even more bold than Moses.

But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me." But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."

The Gentiles were not a people that were seeking God but God sought them, they heard the message, and many were coming to the Lord Jesus Christ because they heard and divine illumination was granted to them. They didn't just hear, they heard with divine illumination. That's what Paul is showing us is required—to hear the Word of God with divine illumination.

What does that mean? I think it means three things.

God's Word requires God's intentionality. When God's Word is being read or preached, God has an intended purpose for that word, depending on who His audience is. Not everybody who hears

the Word of God believes it. We've already established that, as Paul has shown us. For those who come under the hearing of the Word of God, God has an intended purpose, even for those who do not believe.

“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:11)

This can be a hard thing for us to swallow but there are times when God's intended purpose with His Word is to harden a man's heart, not open it. Israel heard the Word of the Lord and it hardened their hearts. Thank God that there are those for whom God uses His Word to melt their hearts. That work is based on the intentionality of God. The Word will have its fruit in those whom God intends it to have.

The second characteristic of divine illumination is God's intervention.

When you hear the Word of God, if you're reading at home during your devotional time or at church, you need God's intervention. Human wit and wisdom is not enough. The working of your mind is not sufficient. What is required is God personally using that word as an encounter with you.

“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:14)

He doesn't understand them because he's a natural man. I like this way of describing the sinner because it describes him naturally. Naturally he's natural. You are born in this way, a member and citizen of one kingdom, one world. You were born of the natural world. The material world is natural, it's a world that's based upon natural laws that God created and set in motion.

But friends, it's not enough to be born once into this natural realm. Jesus said you have to be born a second time, not in the natural realm but in the spiritual. The natural man cannot understand anything about this spiritual realm, that's why He said to Nicodemus, “Unless you be born again, you cannot see the kingdom.” He wasn't talking about heaven to come, He was talking about the spiritual world presently, right here, right now, with Christ as its King.

You cannot enter into the kingdom of God without being born a second time because it's a spiritual realm. God is Spirit. Our spirits are naturally born in a spirit of contrariness. The spirit of man is contrary to God. It cannot perceive or understand God and His communication. That's why he, the person who only lives in the natural realm, cannot know the things of God because they are spiritually known. What is required is the new birth. At the moment of the new birth, which is the beginning of salvation—God must intervene on your behalf. You cannot do this on your own. No preacher can do this for you. Nobody can do it for you. Not even prayer can do it. God has to get involved personally.

I'm looking at many of you for whom God has intervened. God intended His word to have effect in you and He insured it by His own personal intervention, the Holy Spirit Himself came and granted you illumination.

What does *illumination* mean? It means to turn the light on. It means to shed forth understanding. Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" Then He turns it around on them, "Who do you say that I am?"

"Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." I 7 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 16:16, 17)

Stop right there. Do you know what Jesus just said? "You did not get this by human lips or message. Not even My own." Peter did not understand that Jesus was the Messiah simply because he heard Jesus preach or watched Him perform miracles. Jesus is very specific.

*"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My **Father** who is in heaven." (emphasis mine)*

It was God's direct intervention. Certainly, He used His Son to do that but Jesus said it was a work of the spirit of God in the heart of the people.

A perfect example of this is in Acts 16.

"Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul." (Acts 16:14)

It's not only hearing the Gospel but it's hearing with God's intended purpose to intervene in your life and with that intervention He grants understanding.

And that leads to the third thing about divine illumination. *Divine illumination is the impartation of understanding that produces faith.* It's not just perceiving with the mind. The mind is involved but it's much deeper. Our spirit must be quickened, moved upon, given vitality and understanding, and it's that understanding that creates faith.

You can strain your brain until you are exhausted and you will not raise your faith one degree. It is a work of the Spirit intervening in you through His word, and granting understanding through that word. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

The next question we need to consider is, what does a person see or hear by the Spirit when God gives understanding?

II. Divine Illumination is Seeing What God Sees

A. God Sees the Both the Visible and Invisible.

He sees both the natural and the spiritual world at the same time. He made both. He exists in both realms. He's omniscient. He knows perfectly what is in the realm of the natural that we can see with our physical eyes and hear with our physical ears, and He can also see as perceptibly what is invisible to us. That's why Paul says in Romans 4:17 that God is the one who "gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did."

How did light get here? God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God spoke the worlds into existence. They did not exist but God saw them in His Spirit and spoke them into existence. God is able to see what you and I cannot see, both the invisible and the visible.

B. Illumination is the Revelation of the Unseen.

Therefore, illumination is the act of God giving you the ability to see what you could not see in the material realm because it's not yet reality in the natural realm. But it doesn't mean it doesn't exist just because you and I can't see it or know it. God then lets us see what He sees.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)

I don't need to see it for it to be real to me. God has imparted faith by hearing his word, which means that through hearing His word I have received understanding that something is real even though my eyes don't see it. But because it is real, I act like it is so. That's what real faith is. I already have the proof it exists, even though it doesn't yet exist and my prayer is not yet answered. I still have my dilemma and problem but God has given me illumination through His Word of certain promises and has granted me understanding that that promise says if I lack, He will supply my need.

Let me get on a practical level. Let's say you have a problem. You have a deficiency and you don't have the wherewithal to solve the problem. Let me be really clear. If you've the wherewithal to solve the problem, you don't need to be mystical about this. You don't need a word from heaven or an angel coming and saying, "Go solve the problem." If you've the wherewithal, God has already provided the provision before the need and you can go pay off the bill or do whatever you need done.

If you need to apologize and reconcile a relationship, don't sit in your home and pray, "God, would You touch such and such's heart that they will forgive me and we can have a restored relationship?" Do what's in your power to do. Act on your faith. If you've sinned against someone, the Bible says go to the person. If they've sinned against you, the Bible has already told you what you should do—forgive them.

But perhaps it's a dilemma that you don't have the wherewithal to solve. It's a need. It's not a want, it's a legitimate need. What do you have? The Word of the Living God. Friends, I can read

Matthew 6:33, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you,” until all the cows come home—I don’t know how many there are but God owns a lot of them—but I need the Holy Spirit to work for that verse to have any impact on me. That’s what divine illumination and understanding is.

What God does by faith is impart His understanding about that situation or matter and now you see it as God sees it and you can act as if that’s real because in your heart it is.

“By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” (Hebrews 11:7)

It didn’t exist in the material realm yet. No one could see it. But Noah saw it because God let him see it. How? Through His words.

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” (Hebrews 11:13)

This is one of the most amazing statements of the New Testament. Here are real people believing God, they’re confessing what God has shared with them is reality and they don’t see it materialize in their lives but yet the Bible says they didn’t have their faith diminish one iota. It didn’t stop them from believing it. That’s faith.

You might say, “If they had faith, they should have been able to bring it into existence. The mountains should have moved.”

Brothers, sister, reality is not how you determine it should be. Reality is how God determines because He sees it accurately. These people had been given the promises of God, they saw reality as God saw it, and they believed Him having seen them afar off. They were sure of them, embraced them, confessed them as truth, and lived as it was so.

You see this principle working in the life of Moses. Moses had no idea what God wanted to do with Him until God spoke to him and revealed to him what was reality, God’s plan for him. God says that engenders faith.

“esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. 27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.” (Hebrews 11:26-27)

He looked to his reward. God let Moses see reality as it really was in his situation and that created the faith that caused Moses to do what he did.

C. Therefore, Faith is Gift from God.

It's the activity of God in you. We would all say faith is a grace, but what is grace? It's God's undeserved activity doing for you what you could not do for yourself. Therefore, faith is God's activity. We have already established that there is no way you're going to obey God just by hearing the Word. God has to have an intended purpose with that Word and He has to intervene Himself into that Word to give understanding. That's God's activity.

That's why I've said, for 23 years, week after week: love the Book. Become a people of the Book.

Don't worship it. There are a lot of Reformed people out there that I'm a little worried about. I think they think the Bible is the third person of the Trinity, but it isn't. This is the written Word but there is a Living Word and His name is Jesus. He gets involved in this Book when you prayerfully meditate and study it. He makes His truth real by granting understanding.

The more you want your faith in Jesus to increase, the more you have to be engaged with the truth, the facts about the Person faith knows. This goes back to last week's message. You've got to know something about the Person you are trusting, the Object of your faith. The more you know about the Object of your faith, the more confidence you will have when you seek Him according to His Word and will.

Therefore, faith is a gift to you.

However, you and I must learn how to cooperate with God.

Next week we're going to talk about the struggle of faith, Lord willing. But let it suffice today to say that Daniel, Reagan, Emily, and Hannah, they're new converts. To some of you, they look like they're full of faith and like they're moving in realms that you used to move in yourself. Maybe when you see them there's a twinge of jealousy. You say to yourself, "Oh, I remember that." Please don't go to them and say, "You'll remember it one day too." Don't do that to them. What you need to do is remember what you have forgotten, go back, and pick up where you left off.

It looks like they're moving in a realm of great faith, but the truth is they're not. They've just learned by the Spirit to cooperate with what little faith they do have. We all start out with small faith. Unto every man is a measure of faith given. The Lord gives us a measure of faith and with that measure we are to learn how to trust God and move from weak faith to great faith to mature faith. We'll talk about that next week.

There's always going to be a struggle, until you get to the realm of mature faith. When you get there, the struggle is pretty much nonexistent. I know some of you don't believe that. But have you ever experienced consistently mature faith? If you haven't, then what grounds do you have to disagree with me? I have the Bible. I don't need experience. I don't let experience dictate the

Word of God for me. The Bible says mature faith is a faith full of assurance. When you have full assurance, you have perfect peace and the ability to know that you know, and there is no struggle.

I've been saved now 30 years and I have had to learn how to cooperate with faith. Faith is God's activity but God doesn't do all the work. He works in me both to will and do His good pleasure. His good pleasure is that I live by faith for without faith it's impossible for me to please God. So God's good pleasure is that I always trust Him in every circumstance or matter in my life. I've got to learn how to do that. Listen to what Paul tells the Colossians,

“As you have received Jesus Christ, so also live in Him.”

What does that mean? It means that the Christian life is no more difficult than doing what you did the very first day of your Christian existence—trust Him. We can so complicate this that we get so frustrated that we don't even know how to cooperate with God anymore because you don't believe it will work.

Let me give you a point in case. Luke 5:5. Jesus was teaching, He used Peter's boat, and after He was finished speaking, He took them out deeper and said to Peter, “Cast out your nets.”

“But Simon answered and said to Him, ‘Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing;’

Can I give you my paraphrase? “Lord, Your background is carpentry. I'm a fisherman, my father was a fisherman, and my granddaddy was a fisherman. I know all there is to know about fishing and you don't catch fish in the middle of the day casting a net. You fish at night, that's when we catch fish. And we've been fishing all night and we're wore out.”

“...nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.” (Luke 5:5)

How much certainty did Peter have that when he let out that net he was going to haul in the biggest catch he had ever made? Zero. There was no certainty. The only certainty he had was that it wouldn't work, and he was certain about that.

He also had a little bit of certainty about something else. He had a certainty that this Jesus was not a regular guy. He had seen Him turn the water into wine at the marriage in Cana, seen Him do a few miracles, heard Him teach, but that's all. He had not been following Jesus. In fact, after following Jesus for a few weeks, he goes back to Capernaum. Jesus tears off to Jerusalem for Passover and now, after Passover, returns to Capernaum and finds Peter, Andrew, James, and John, doing what they've always done—fishing. Peter doesn't know much about Jesus but what little he has learned about the Object of his faith is enough to call Him “Master.”

“Master, we've toiled all night, but I know there is something unique about You...”

I don't think Peter even understood He was the Son of God—deity veiled in flesh—but he did know enough to say, “Okay, even though I know this isn't going to work, I'm going to do what You told me to do.” That was faith.

It goes back to our definition of faith. What's faith? Acting like something is real or true. In this case, Peter's faith was so little, so weak, that he didn't have any degree of certainty that he would catch fish, but he obeyed. He acted nonetheless. What a critical word, *nonetheless*.

Do you know what that means? It means that faith is obeying God even if you're not sure. That's where we all usually start. But I have good news for you.

III. It is the Christian's Responsibility to Believe God For What He Has Revealed

That means God will always give us divine illumination when we need it.

A. Divine Illumination is Promised to Us.

Before we could get to Romans 10 there were so many extraneous things that you had to know before you could rightly discern what Romans 10 was saying. 1 Corinthians 2 has a significant fact for us.

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.” (1 Corinthians 2:12)

What is the spirit of the world? It means the natural realm. But you're not natural anymore. You're both natural and supernatural. I'm talking to a people who are living in two worlds at the same time. You're in two worlds. Depending on how you develop and cooperate with Him in your faith is going to determine which world you pay more attention to, the physical or the spiritual. But you're spiritual nonetheless. Paul is saying that you have not received the spirit of this world but who is from God, that you might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

The Holy Spirit dwells within you for a distinct reason: to illuminate and give you understanding about what God has already given you. Therefore, Paul says in verse 16,

“For ‘who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:16)

That means every Christian in this room has the wisdom of God in them because Christ is in them by His Spirit. Christ knows everything and when you need to know it—you're on a need-to-know basis—He will make it known to you.

But He's already given you a written Word about general principles about life. Friends, I don't need special words or impressions from the Holy Spirit when I've already been given truth about my matter or circumstance. The Spirit of God is already in me and He will help me understand what this book is saying and apply it to my situation and act in faith, because acting in obedience and acting in faith is the exact same thing.

God has promised to let you in on His secrets as you need to know them, but you have a Book that's already revealed His plan for your life that gives you general direction and safety, a perimeter of His will within which to operate as God leads. The Christian's responsibility in divine illumination is singular and that is to be committed to doing whatever God promises. You don't need visions or angels or dreams, you just need a heart that says, "Lord, nevertheless, at Your word I'll do this."

If you wait until God brings the test or the challenge to make that decision, you're probably not going to do it.

B. The Christian's Responsibility in Divine Illumination.

The promises of God do not mean you automatically have the understanding you need. Again, there is a responsibility you and I have to exercise, utilize, the mind of Christ. The first thing required in our responsibility is to be absolutely committed in our relationship with Jesus.

Listen to what Romans 12:1-2 says.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:1-2)

In other words, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God," means I have a heart that is sold out to do whatever God tells me to do and if I have that kind of heart and attitude then I can know what God wants me to do. That's what Paul is saying.

You cannot work this biblical principle in reverse. You cannot say, "God, let me know what You want me to do and then I'll commit to You," because most often you won't do it. You'll be so scared and frightened that you won't take the step of faith God is asking of you. You cannot understand what God illuminates to you, even about His Scriptures if your heart is not committed to obey. It's so simple.

If Scripture is difficult for you to understand, I'll tell you right now it's not because you have difficulty reading or your education level is too low. It's because your heart's desire to obey is too low.

But if you put yourself on the altar and say, "I'm Yours." If you have every digit of both hands and feet on the altar, and you take the dagger and thrust it into your own self-will and confidence, then you can discern what God is showing you about His reality in your life.

Read verse three of Romans 12.

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith." (Romans 12:3)

He's writing to believers. This is not a message to the lost, this is a message to the saints at Rome, "I know you've got a measure of faith, but your faith doesn't operate in your life, giving you the understanding of what God's will is for your life until there is a selling out to obey God, even if it doesn't make sense or appears foolish." You've got to be committed to obey.

If we did to our spouses what we do to the Almighty, none of us would have stayed married. Most people say Romans 12 is using the language of worship and it is, but it's also the terminology of marriage. Two people commit themselves to holy matrimony and they do so based upon the same commitment, do they not? "No more agenda but to please you. No more self-will or reliance, I'm giving myself to you. All that I am, all that I possess, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, better or worse—you're stuck with me, baby." It's the same language: commitment.

Romans 12:1-2 can get so lost in the technical words of worship that we forget that this is the description of your relationship with Jesus. This is relationship terminology. Are you committed to your relationship with Jesus that you so love Him that you'll do whatever He says? Faith works through love (Galatians 5:6).

This isn't about cold, religious calculation, checking off my checklist and doing what I think is required of me so I can feel validated that I'm a good Christian. This is about relationship. Are you committed to your relationship with Jesus that if He tells you to cast out nets when it doesn't make sense then you cast out the net or get out of the boat yourself and walk on water, when you know to the natural mind that's not possible?

I want us to go back to our text as I conclude. Go back to verse 21. Faith comes by hearing but not just human hearing only, and not just study of the Word of God only. The Lord, with His intended purpose, intervenes, giving me understanding. He creates in a lost person or activates within a Christian the faith to trust God because he or she can see reality as God sees it and then acts like it's so.

I love Manly Beasley's statement here. I've quoted it so much, I feel like it's mine. "Faith is acting like it's so when it isn't so, so it will be so because God said it's so."

I want to be so committed to this Lord who loves me so much that I know He can't mislead me. Spurgeon said, "He's too good to be unkind, too wise to make a mistake." I know I can trust Him, but sometimes He tells me to do things like get out of boats and cast nets when it doesn't make any sense to me and I often struggle because I'm afraid. What do you do? Please do not as Israel did.

Israel heard the word of God from the greatest preachers in the Old Testament; Moses, Isaiah, Elijah, and others but God says of Israel,

"But to Israel he says: 'All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people.'" (Romans 10:21)

Do you know what the word *disobedient* means? It literally means "not to allow one's self to be persuaded." It's the Greek word that means, "I refuse to be persuaded."

I'm going to say something that is going to be harsh to many of you. May God give you the understanding that this is said in love and tenderness. But many of you are not walking by faith in Christ today. You've been saved but you're not walking in the same way you received Him, by faith, because you've said to God in your spirit and your actions, "Lord, You can't persuade me of a life of faith. I'm not persuaded that's the way to live. It doesn't pass the test of common sense. I don't understand the life of faith. I tried to live the life of faith and I failed miserably. Don't talk to me about living by faith. I don't get it; therefore, I won't do it."

It's not that you don't get it, it's that you won't do it. You won't even be persuaded by God.

There's another word in the 21st verse, *contrary*. It means to murmur or complain against. You won't live by faith but the very first time God doesn't answer your prayer or come through for you the way you think, you begin to complain against God and murmur against Him.

Friends, look at the object lesson of Israel. What did God do? He left Israel and He turned His attention elsewhere. Do you hear me? I'm talking to believers today. I'm not talking to pseudo-Christians today, although this has application, I'm talking to my fellow brothers and sisters, who I believe are saved. You refuse to be persuaded and give yourself wholeheartedly to obey whatever He reveals to you. You harden your heart and God will not work, His activity will come to a stop. Jesus could not do many works in Capernaum because of their unbelief.

Too many of us are scared that God is going to tell us to get out of the boat and there is no visible support. Friend, you don't have to be afraid. If your heart's committed to obey whatever the Lord reveals it to you, then when He illuminates and gives you understanding, then you can come to peace and fear leaves. Here's what God is offering us—life more abundantly. A life lived by faith is the most exciting life there is.

I had a man come to my office not too long ago after he heard about God leading us into itinerant ministry, and he said to me, "I wish I could live like that." This is a good man. He knows the

Word of God. Yet, at the same time, he knows his life can be explained by the natural. His life is not very different from the natural man. He lives by his own understanding. He lives by common sense, unless he has a great need. Then he'll cry out to God and sometimes God will answer.

I didn't ask for a confession, he came into my office confessing, "I wish I could live like this. I know my life would be more exciting than it is now." Yes, it would. To sell out for the mundane and the routine breaks my heart. Don't you look at me and say, "You're a man of faith." The truth is my sea legs get wobbly and sometimes I sink like Peter, but I have enough faith to say, "Lord, save me," and He grabs me and lifts me up.

You've got to start with that commitment, "I'm going to lay myself on the altar of surrender and whatever You say, I'll do it. I'll deal with my sin. I don't want to, really, I still like this sin but I'm willing to kill it for You because I trust You. Nevertheless, at Your word..." Brother, sister, that's when you begin to see the power of God come on your behalf and deliver you. Then your life becomes only explainable by the supernatural.

Can your coworkers, better yet, your children, can they say, "The only way I can understand mom and dad's life is by the Gospel"? Is that what they say? Do they say the only explanation for how you live is the Gospel? If those who know you best can't say that why would anyone else?

I'm not trying to motivate you with guilt, no, not at all. The Lord is offering you an exciting life. If you say, "You can't persuade me," then you're a disobedient and contrary person and the joy of the Lord will not be experienced.

I conclude with this. Faith is not doing what's normal, it's turning loose of normality to walk with God. In order for you to walk in faith, you have to turn loose of things you call normal because God is supernatural. "I've come that they might have life and have it more abundantly." There's nothing normal in that kind of life. Amen.