

We Must Believe!

Believing the Invisible

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Let us start out by turning to Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

What is being said here is that without confidence in God's fidelity, His trustworthiness, His truth, His wisdom, and His promises—without faith in those, without belief in them, we cannot please Him.

Now, this is true not only with God, but it is true with those we live with—our husbands and wives. It is true in our workplace. Without confidence in the husband, the wife's marriage relationship suffers. Without confidence in the wife, the husband's marriage relationship will suffer. Without confidence in your business partners, and so forth, there is not the trust that should be there as well.

The requirement of having faith and confidence in God is not arbitrary. It is not up for discussion. It is an absolute must. It is indispensable.

We must believe that God exists, not with just an academic belief, but a belief that moves us to the action of obedience to the laws, statutes, judgments, and commandments that God has made.

It causes us to want to be approved by God, and to draw closer to Him. We must believe that He will be a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

We must believe in the fullness of God in all that He has revealed about Himself, His Kingdom, His eternal life, our future of being part of the God Family. To believe is essential if we are to be accepted into the Kingdom of God. These are pretty tough statements.

But is not it interesting that we have been asked to believe in God while living in a time where nobody believes anyone.

In a recent poll to the credibility of the honesty of the president of the United States, a majority of those polled—44% of the people—felt that the president lied to them periodically. I am sure that the credibility of all politicians is suspect. The American people seem to take for granted that they are going to be lied to and misled by their leaders. Or, the leadership has some secret agenda, and therefore cannot be trusted.

Sales and marketing methods today are also greatly suspect. Hardly anyone really trusts ads. If the prices drop now, we were being charged too much before. Because today's ads mislead, for one to truly come to the understanding that they have a good bargain, requires a lot of shopping around.

We do not trust our doctors. We, then, ask the question, "Are they really telling us the truth? Are they charging a fair price?"

Our daughter, Andrea, had our last granddaughter, and they charged her for an episiotomy. But she did not have an episiotomy. And so we called the hospital and said, "Look, you are charging the insurance company for something that did not take place." Their comment was interesting: "Well, we have an understanding with the insurance company." I am not sure what that meant, but it probably meant, "We have an understanding that we can lie."

My wife sprained her ankle, but we thought it was broken, and so took her into the hospital on our own crutches. Guess what! We were charged for crutches! It is customary.

We do not trust anybody.

When a mechanic gives us a quote, the first thought we have is that our hands are going up, and we have a pistol at our back, and we ask, "Is he telling me the truth?"

Recently, Sears and Roebuck, a major department store chain, was convicted of deliberately lying to and gouging their customers. They were taken to court, and a large judgment was made against them, and they had to suspend operations for a period of time, all because they were lying.

Considering the environment we are living in, is it any wonder that Jesus Christ asked the question found in Luke 18.

Luke 18:2-8 "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'" Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

So, here was a judge who was appointed to try cases. And he did not fear God, nor man. He had no respect for the rights of his fellow man. He was a self-centered, egotistical person. A defenseless widow came to him without any power, to ask for justice against her adversary. Justice was what the judge was supposed to put forth and give out. But he had no disposition to do so. So, the judge put off, and delayed, and finally he said, "Though I don't fear God nor man, but because this widow continues to cry for justice, and won't leave me alone, I will grant her a favorable decision before she wears me out. She's driving me crazy." And then God said to hear what the unjust judge said, pay attention to the lesson to be learned, and receive practical instruction. God is not reflected here in the unrighteous judge, so we get this right off the bat.

The lesson is to pray and not faint. The lesson is to persist! In this end time that is a good thing to hang on to.

God basically said, "Shall I not avenge and perform justice, and vindicate My elect?" The widow received what she would not have received, except

that she persevered. God is not unjust but is here to bring justice. Therefore, if the judge who is wicked can be forced to administer justice through her perseverance, how much more shall God, who is good and has perfect love for us, give justice to His elect who call upon Him day and night? We are His elect because it is a sign they are continually praying to God.

God is telling us that we will be tried and tested, and it may be for a long time, but even though the trials go on, and tribulation may be all around us, even though it may seem as though God has gone off somewhere, He said we are to remember that He has heard our prayers, and will grant what is good for us in His plan for us. He will save you, and He will save us, and He said we can count on that. That is sure. He will avenge His elect speedily, perhaps at a time when they/we least expect it.

And then, the question comes, nevertheless, will the Son of Man find faith? Though it is true that God will defend His elect, will He find His elect faithful? That is the question being asked. The danger is again to maybe overkill is not that God will be unfaithful, but He will be true to all His promises. The question is, will we still have faith? Will we still believe in God?

Barnes' Notes made this comment:

The sole meaning of this phrase, therefore is, there is more danger that the people are going to grow weary and get tired, than that God will be found unfaithful to avenge His people.

So, the truth is that God will deliver His people from their calamities to save them, though He tests them for a long time. That is a promise.

He asked, "Will I find faith in you? Will you believe Me? Will continue in your prayers? Will you continue in your studies, your obedience, and your brotherly love? Or, will you no longer believe Me?" The bottom line is that God *cannot* lie, and He will do all He has promised, but will we let the end time trials tear us to shreds? And shake our belief, and shake our faith?

The end of this age—I do not think any of us have a clue as to the disaster that this is going to be. And I do not know what God has planned for you and

for me. We would all like to be in a place of safety. We do not know that is what God is going to do, [but we] hope it is. But it is going to be mass confusion; it is going to rip away everything that we consider normal. It is going to take your house, your car, your backyards, your computer, your job, your food, and it is going to just tear the life that you have come to understand as being normal to shreds.

Let us take a look at what those days are going to be like. Turn to Luke 21. You could be looking at Isaiah 13, or Zephaniah 1, the book of Revelation, Joel, or Amos to get further descriptions of this.

Luke 21:8-11 And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them. But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately." Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven."

It is going to be a time we cannot even imagine.

Luke 21:12-19 "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls."

Another translation of that is "by your endurance, you save your life; by your belief in God."

Luke 21:20-26 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear."

(On the Feast of Trumpets the folks on the west coast heard about [what] that sounds like; how their bowels are churning; like a woman giving birth; their heart pounding in their chest.)

Luke 21:26-27 "Men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

So brethren, with all this coming upon the world that we live in, with our life being disrupted as never before, we are being asked to believe in an Individual we have never seen face to face. We are being asked to have faith in a God that has not spoken to us—His voice to our ears. We are being asked to trust a Being that the world around us says does not exist, or at the very least delays His coming, or has gone off somewhere. And to top it off, we are also asked to belief in a Book and the promises in that Book that the majority of the world cannot even begin to agree upon, that many think are just an assemblage of Jewish fables. With all this happening, how can God begin to tell us what He does in,

Proverbs 24:10 If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.

That is a tough one to swallow, with all those things coming.

Adam Clarke comments:

If you give way to discouragement, and despair in the day of adversity, time of trial or temptation, He said your strength is small. Your strength is contracted. In times of trial we should endeavor to be doubly courageous, because when a man loses his courage, his strength avails him nothing.

I do not know how many of you have ever been terrified, absolutely terrified, and have seen what that does to your body—you cannot catch your breath; you cannot run; you can hardly walk. You almost want to get down in the old fetal position and just hang on. You are useless.

He said, "When this time comes, when the trial comes, you are going to have to be doubly courageous; your contact with God is going to have to be doubly strong." Frankly, it is going to have to be your life because it will be your life. With all this facing us, how can we—the elect—stand in belief and faith at this end time?

In my working career I sold all vegetable shortenings and oils for 37 years, mostly liquid shortenings and oils. Selling is an interesting profession. I think people view salesmen as good-time Charlies. They are on the golf course; they are taking customers out for swanky meals. If anybody wanted to be in sales, I would say that the first word that you have to learn to accept and to overcome is the word, "No." You will hear it almost all the time.

But there have been times in my early career that everything seemed to be going my way. I seemed to be riding a sales crest where I could do nothing wrong. And it seemed like everything turned to gold.

And all of a sudden, things did not turn to gold; they turned to ick. Like the pitcher who is throwing a little bit off, I could not figure what I was doing wrong. I mean, here I was, this wonderful individual—tall, good looking, glib of tongue—out there selling, and nobody wanted to buy from me. It did not sound reasonable.

But after weeks of being a non-producer, I finally realized that I had gotten away from the basic foundation of who I was, and what my job was. I was into all the flash in the pan stuff that sales people were supposed to have, trying to look good and be somebody, but I had gotten away from what produced results. What produced results was the foundation of honestly calling on a customer, telling them who I was, what products I was selling, and helping them to understand how those products would be of service to him, and that the price was a just price for the quality being offered.

And as I grew in my job, my intent was to always help my customers make an intelligent decision, even if I did not get the sale. And because of this, my customers trusted me, and they bought from me.

For over 37 years whether I called on mom and pop restaurants, or whether I called in the boardrooms of a corporate president or a chief executive officer, the foundation never changed. And when I worked from that foundation, I prospered, and when I wandered from that foundation, everything went into confusion.

What about our spiritual foundation? The collapse of the church—what shook our belief, and sapped our strength? What cracked our foundation? The doctrines began to be changed. Long-held beliefs began to be ridiculed. Some of our brethren began to cease keeping the Sabbath. In fact, some of them began to work on the Sabbath. And some began to eat unclean foods, and I knew several who filled their freezers immediately with shrimp and pork; it was almost like this had been some longing they had all their church life, and now they were given permission by a man to do it. And they began to question everything that God taught through Mr. Armstrong. Division began occur where for the most part unity had existed. What was taking place, you see, was the dismantling of our foundation that we work from.

(Now we in Southern California know what it means when a house comes off the foundation. You get one of these earthquakes, and your house goes off, and usually there is no hope of saving the house. It just has to be torn down.)

Every one of us felt an insecurity that we never felt before and we began to question everything. Anger came. Fear came. Confusion; frustration;

depression struck us; separation from friends and family followed, and we began to believe what Jesus Christ said in,

Luke 12:49-53 "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

And certainly, we have seen this take place. The foundation that we felt was so good began to crack and split; and all the truth we thought was proven was in question. We began to realize that we were not as personally solid as we should have been. A good friend of mine told me, "I thought all I had to do was follow Mr. Armstrong into the Kingdom. And now he died, and I found that I had to think for myself."

How important is it to have the right spiritual foundation? I tell you *it is everything!* Without that foundation, you do not have anything.

Turn to Luke 6.

Luke 6:46 "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"

That is certainly a question for every one of us to consider. We want the Kingdom, we want all that God offers, but are willing to be obedient?

Luke 6:47-49 "Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house

on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."

We will discuss why in a few moments.

He is saying, "Let me show you what the man is like that comes to Me, and hears what I have to say, and is obedient. He is a man who digs a deep footing making sure it is on solid rock, and that he lays a proper foundation of truth." And then, as occurs from time to time in that area, (speaking specifically), the waters rage, but his home is not washed away. It stands because he has that foundation.

But, he that hears and wants to be in the Kingdom of God, wanting all the promises of God can be like the foolish man who sets his house on sand or on the ground without a proper foundation, and when the storm comes—doctrinal differences, liberalism, the forming of different groups, difficult times, postponements, new moons, ^{AD} nauseam—the stream eats away at the base of the house, till all of a sudden the house falls, and is totally ruined.

As it says in Matthew 7, "The fall is great." Why is the fall so great? How many opportunities do we have to become God? You see, this person that was called to be a son of God, missed the mark, and he fell. And, what a great fall that was.

What are the basics of a solid foundation? We must prove that God exists. If you do not do this, you do not have a foundation. Without that in the foundation, it will crumble. This may be something we all did years ago, but it is important to get back to basics; it is good to review the seven points that God exists. (I will be frank with you: I had to get my old Bible out. I had it written in the front of it.)

The first proof that God exists is:

(1) that the existence of a law demands a great Lawgiver. Spiritual laws, physical laws—somebody had to set them up.

(2) The existence of life demands a Life-giver. Life comes from life.

(3) Creation demands a Creator. When you look at the world around us, you find it is running down. So, it had to be set up to run down by Someone.

(4) God produces kind after their kind; the Godkind, the mankind, the animal-kind.

(5) Only man has the capacity to think and to reason. No other creature does. God set us up that way. In Genesis 1:26 when He said We will make man in our image, not spiritually but physically. Design in the universe demands a Designer, the orderliness of the heavens. What do we set the atomic clock by? We set it by the heavens. Man cannot keep perfect time.

(6) Fulfilled prophecy. We will spend a little time here. In Isaiah 41:21-24, God tells the people, "Prognosticate! Go ahead! Tell Me what is coming! See if what you say is true!" There was a prophecy concerning Babylon being 2,300 acres, double walled. And it would be taken without a fight. One hundred years before the time of Nabopolassar God had Isaiah tell the destruction of Babylon.

Turn to Isaiah 13. There are so many prophecies in the Bible that we can look at, and see that they had been fulfilled.

Isaiah 13:19-22 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will never be inhabited, nor will it be settled from generation to generation; nor will the Arabian pitch tents there, nor will the shepherds make their sheepfolds there. But wild beasts of the desert will lie there, and their houses will be full of owls; ostriches will dwell there, and wild goats will caper there. The hyenas will howl in their citadels, and jackals in their pleasant palaces. Her time is near to come, and her days will not be prolonged."

This is a huge city with double wall defenses. About one hundred years later, God had Jeremiah prophesy in Jeremiah 50:39-40 that the walls would be thrown down (verse 15) and will become a heap of ruins; and it all came to pass. Remember Cyrus' army diverted the river going in under the gate, and

in a dry riverbed they took the city without a fight. And later it was to be Alexander's capitol, but he did not take it; he died. The city just simply vanished. Even though it is being excavated today, the locals still will not stay there, and very few visitors go there.

(7) Answered prayer. They may not be gigantic prayers, like praying for world peace. That is coming.

I remember Mr. Al Caruso (for some of you old timers who knew him) he was going through Chicago and had a tremendously sore throat. He landed at the Chicago airport, and asked the janitor, "I'm a minister, can I borrow your mop and broom closet for a while? I have to ask God for something." So the janitor unlocked the door, and he went into the room, got down on his knees, and said, "Father, I've got to have a lemon." (This is in the middle of December. Where do you get lemons in Chicago in the middle of December?) So he got up and he thanked the janitor, and walked out. His throat was terribly sore. And there, sitting on a candy counter, just as he was leaving the airport, was a pyramid of oranges. Guess what was sitting on top? One lemon.

We have another friend of mine who went hiking without socks one day, thinking, "My feet can take it." After about a mile or two, his feet were killing him. He developed big blisters. He got down on his knees, and said, "Father, I need a pair of socks." He turned the corner in the trail, and there was a pair of socks sitting on a rock. Now, they were not brand new with a label on them, they were old and smelly, and had a couple of holes in them, but he had not told God what kind of socks he wanted.

I could go on twenty minutes of giving examples of answered prayer that could only have been from God. We have to know these things.

The second thing we have in our foundation is that we prove that the Bible is the Word of God. We have to be able to trust this. I am going to be reading my notes for a few moments because this [I am going to share] is a little complicated.

The books of the Bible were written covering a large span of years from about 1500 BC to 100 AD. And the things that were prophesied in the Old

Testament to happen to the Messiah were prophesied hundreds and even thousands of years before they were to happen. Even so, they were fulfilled down to the most minute detail.

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

This is showing that the Messiah would be born of the woman, and that the Messiah would bruise Satan's head, meaning that He would resist all of Satan's temptations, and qualify to replace him as the ruler of the world; that Satan would cause the death of Jesus. This was written almost 4,000 years before the birth of Christ.

We know that He was to be born in Bethlehem, found in Micah 5:2; from the tribe of Judah, Genesis 49:10; to be born of a virgin, Isaiah 7; that not a bone would be broken in His death, and they would cast lots for His clothes, Psalm 22; and that He would be a light to the Gentiles, Isaiah 9. And on and on it goes with the prophecies fulfilled one after another. It proves the Bible is the Word of God, and that the Bible can be trusted.

Turn to Hebrews 11.

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

Substance means, "beneath (sub)", and stance means, "what you stand on." In a home, it would be like the subflooring, or the foundation. In the church it means we stand on the foundation that God exists, and that what He promises in His Word is to be trusted; thus we believe God and stand on this hope, and His Word. Substance could also be translated "confidence." Faith is the confidence of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

It is this belief that imparts to us reality and causes us to act and conduct our lives accordingly. Without this, we will do whatever we want.

For example, if you were to come to the Anaheim congregation for the first time, and you were given a map to direct you, you would take action based

on the instructions to get to church. Even though you had never physically been here before, or seen the church, from remarks and conversation concerning where we meet and the fact that I gave you a map, you would be led to believe that the Anaheim congregation was real, and you would be led to act upon that belief.

[In the same way] we do not see the Kingdom of God, and we have not physically seen the Father and Jesus Christ. But we believe that They are real, and They have caused us to live a certain way, and to become part of the God Family. Therefore, based on this, we act in a different fashion than the world around us.

All the heroes of the Bible listed in Hebrews 11 had the same foundation to act on that you and I do—the belief and trust in God. When we believe God exists, and the Bible is His Word, and all the wonderful promises that belong to us are trusted and believed, His promise to never, ever leave you nor forsake you (Hebrews 13:5) is ours. The knowledge that the eyes of the Eternal run to and fro through the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is right for Him (II Chronicles 16) and all the other wonderful promises of God become personal to us. We can trust them.

But without real belief, the wonderful encouragement that God has for us is going to slip away. We will rely on ourselves.

What is the meaning of the word believe? The Greek word means, "to believe; to be persuaded; enhanced; to place confidence in."

To trust signifies reliance upon no mere credence—not merely saying, "Yes, there is a God," but really knowing that there is a God. There is more to believing than just giving credence or casual agreement to what God says. One can believe in God, and want to be in His Kingdom, want to receive all the promises of God, and yet not do anything physically to take steps to overcome and to draw close to God; to show God that he is thankful for the opportunity that is been given to him.

Turn to Matthew 7.

Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."

This is Jesus Christ speaking. He knows what He is talking about. He sees down the road.

Matthew 7:22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

He is saying that not everyone who calls himself a Christian will be accepted. They will claim, "Look at the things we did!" In reality, who did these things? It was God who performed all that was done. These men forgot what had been done through them. And even though God had worked through them in all these instances, He told them to depart as workers of iniquity, because they did not take their calling seriously. They did not really believe what God had to say about overcoming, about being humble, about loving, about being forgiving, and all those things.

And it is in this section of Scripture that God states the qualification of being in His Kingdom. Not everyone who comes to Him, but he who does the will of the Father in heaven; he who believe on what needs to be done, and does it, will be in the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 7:23-27 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock [not a rock]: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

We heard this once before, and we just heard it again. We have the example of what it is like to be a man that trusts God. Both men wanted to be in the kingdom, both men heard the sayings of God, but only one had the belief in God that caused him to act on what God told him to do. The other heard, but treated God's Word casually, and let down, not being serious.

This could be likened to any one of us today who come to Sabbath services only once in a while, but do not pray between Sabbath service and Sabbath service. We just come. We are sort of Sabbath service Christians who maybe takes time off on the Sabbath to go to some place like an amusement park, or to do some personal business. He really is not taking what God says to be fact.

The individual that did not build his house on a sound foundation wants what God offered, but he did not value it enough. Get those words. *He did not value it enough to put forth the effort to be worthy of it.* Believing requires action on our part—the action of being faithful to God. Believing teaches us, it strengthens us, and it helps us to stand when trials come.

Turn to Hebrews 5, referring to Jesus Christ,

Hebrews 5:7-9 Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.

Jesus knew what it was to be obedient. There was no doubt. He was always obedient. But, here in this physical life, He learned what it meant to be obedient under trial and pressure. Because of this, He became our High Priest.

Here we see His belief: His Father's plan, His Father's laws, His Father's instructions put into practice. It is an example for us to look and say, "This is what belief should be like."

Turn to Philippians 2.

Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

See? He subjected Himself to the law of God, and all that it meant. He had the same foundation of belief to work from that you and I do, although He did have the Spirit of God without measure. He went through the same exact process that we must working from the right foundation—the foundation of faith, the belief, the confidence of all that God promised that He would do. And based on that, He humbled Himself and committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. You can read about that in I Peter 2:23.

Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

You see, our work is to put forth effort to build the godly character and develop the mind of Jesus Christ—to have the same belief.

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

We are to have the same mind of trust in God that Jesus Christ did. We are to make Him our Model, our Forerunner, our Archegos, our Pathfinder. We are to look at Him that way.

You see, Jesus Christ believed God, and He valued everything that God wanted Him to accomplish. And He wants us to believe and to value all that God promises us as well.

God loves us, and He wants to give us everything He can—He is offering Sonship with Him and to share His Kingdom. Thus, when we turn away from Him by letting down, by not valuing what we have been given, or what

we have been offered, then we force God to pull back from us, perhaps God has to deal with us in a corrective fashion. Maybe a fashion we do not want to be dealt with in.

Just as was mentioned at the beginning, any relationship where one party does not believe, the other will not prosper, and is doomed to failure. And if we do not believe God the Father and Jesus Christ, our relationship with Them is going to be on the way out, it is going to fail.

Turn to Psalm 78. Hear how Israel tempted God, and did not believe Him in the wilderness:

Psalm 78:18-22 And they tested God in their heart by asking for the food of their fancy. Yes, they spoke against God: They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? Behold, He struck the rock, so that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? [One miracle after another: the Red Sea, the defeat of Pharaoh's army, and they kept saying, 'Can God do this?'] Can He provide meat for His people?" Therefore the LORD heard this and was furious; so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel, because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation.

Do you see what a relationship needs? It needs belief and trust.

Turn to Romans 11.

Romans 11:16-23 For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of

God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

Paul is telling the Gentiles not to become puffed up over Israel, and because of their calling from God. He reminds them that God grafted them into the Source of all understanding, and that they would be fed well, and they would grow and produce. But then he cautions them to not boast against the house of Israel, who were not included in this calling. Do not say that those Israel were cut off so I could be grafted in—puffed up and filled with vanity—so I could be called, indicating there must have been something special about the Gentiles to be called. But he also reminds them that they could be cut off too. He reminds them they were the wild olive, and were grafted in, and God really wished to graft in the natural branches if they would. And when He does, they will really take to it.

So the two lessons to be learned here are:

Number one: To be part of what God is doing, we must believe God. That is a fact.

Number two: We must never think we are better than our brothers, or better than anybody else.

We are blessed because we have been called by God.

Now, with belief being the key to our relationship with God, we must be aware of what can destroy that belief and avoid it. We know from a previous sermon that not being thankful to God will tear your relationship to pieces. It will cause you to forget God, to not appreciate Him, and therefore when you do not love somebody, you have no interest in them. We know that being thankful is important, we also know that letting down in prayer and study and not being consistent in driving as hard as you can to change from what you are to what God is, or letting down in those areas will cause you to slowly drift away.

There is one more principle that we need to be aware of, especially at this end time.

Turn to Jeremiah 10.

Jeremiah 10:1-3 Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel. Thus says the LORD: "Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed at them. For the customs of the peoples are futile; . . .

This is the point God is making: The customs of the heathen are vain.

Deuteronomy 12:29-32 "When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it."

Turn to Galatians 1. Paul knew that to listen to other people [false teachers] would cause people to wander off.

Galatians 1:6-9 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

II Corinthians 6:14-15 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

II Corinthians 11:3-4 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!

What is being said is the belief we have, the faith we have been given is a treasure that must be protected. Of all the people on the face of the earth, Israel was called to be an example to the nations round about. And we have been called an example as well, but we have the added opportunity of being invited to be in the Kingdom of God. God knew that the contact with people of a different mind would pervert His people and cause them to follow ways that would lead to destruction.

The principal lesson is that we must be alert as to what we take into our minds, and indeed be watchful concerning who we spend time with. I am sure that there may be some who say, "Ah ha! Ministerial control over you! I can see it now! They're going to tell us who we can talk to, and who we can't." This is not the case. There is no way any of us could monitor you or would want to. This is just a commonsense warning from God. Be careful who you associate with.

We have people preaching things off the wall—sacred names, sovereign citizens, new moon, postponements, you name it.

There is a saying when you play golf: "If you play with a better golfer, you play a better game. If you play with an inferior golfer, you play an inferior game that goes to pieces." This applies to any sport.

The same principle applies to God's people. If we associate with those that are spiritually strong, and who are trying to overcome, and have their feet firmly on the ground (foundation), you will be stronger and better yourselves. But if we try and associate with others to get them to see our point, or just to investigate every little twig that grows out there, we are going to find we will start to let down.

One thing I have found over my 66 years of living, very seldom (rarely) can you bring somebody else up. Usually, if you get into a bad relationship, you are going to be the one that goes down. We had a family here in the Anaheim congregation who was very close to us. We loved them very much. Had them over to our house many times, but they left and got involved in something else. And one of our friends was with the wife of this couple, and she was heard to comment later on, "You know, I don't really know what to believe anymore." She took all these off-the-wall things in, and pretty soon, she had to make confession. "I really don't know what to believe. I'm just so confused."

Brethren, Satan is alive and well. You can tell by all the confusion in the greater churches of God. It is something we try to protect you from, but there is something you can do as an individual—watch what you allow into your mind, and stay with those who are strong and solid.

There are many wonderful benefits that come to those who believe God. We will go through some quickly. There will be a few about Abraham.

Genesis 15:6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

So, when we believe in God, God counts it as righteousness.

James 2:23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.

We have a new thing added to it, here. When you believe in God, not only does He credit you with being righteous, but He counts you as a friend.

Romans 4:17-24 (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.

So here we see that Abraham because of his belief was made a father of many nations, righteousness was imputed to him, and it is also imputed to us if we believe.

Romans 10:11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

We may be laughed at by this world, we may be looked down upon by this world, we may be prisoners of this world, we may be the off scouring of this world, but upon the return of Jesus Christ, we will not be ashamed. We will shine like the very sun. We will have the glory of God. We will not be ashamed. We will be bowed down to. The enemies who so persecuted us will become our footstools. God said, "You believe on Me [that translates into obedience], you will not be ashamed."

Daniel believed God and was spared in the lion's den. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were spared, and we will be spared too.

John 3:15-18 "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only

begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned [what a wonderful blessing]; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

We will not perish; we will have eternal life. We will not be condemned with all the mistakes we made, yet belief in God will help us to stand, and God will not impute those to us, as long as we work at overcoming, and be in obedience, and repent.

John 3:36 “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Nothing could be more plain! If you believe in God, you shall see eternal life; if you do not believe, you will not.

John 12:44 Then Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me.”

So we are saying that if we on believe Jesus Christ, we believe on His Father.

And finally,

John 12:46 “I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.”

When you believe in Jesus Christ, and you believe that He exists, that God exists, and the Bible is His Word, we no longer live in darkness. This whole world lives in darkness. This world is in confusion. It is in mysticism. It does not believe in God's laws.

What a gift it is to have the truth, and to believe in that truth! The truth sets you free. What a wonderful thing it is for those who believe.

Indeed, it is a wonderful future in store for those believe God.

Turn to Mark 9 because there is another aspect of this that we have to cover.

Mark 9:14-24 And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. And He asked the scribes, "What are you discussing with them?" Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not."

He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me." Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

You see this father had lived with his son since he was small, and for years he saw the demon tear at him, and I am sure the father saved his life from time to time from the water and the fire. And he watched his son gnash his teeth in terror, and falling to the ground, foaming at the mouth. This was a common experience. It is a tough thing to believe when you have all this other evidence all around. No doubt he felt a hopelessness of the situation especially after seeing the disciples unable to cast it out. You can almost picture him being all charged up, looking for them to cast it out finally, and they had been helping people right and left. "Here's my son. Heal him," and they could not do it. Can you imagine? His hopes were dashed!

But then Christ arrives, and this father asked in great compassion, "Help me if You can—please, heal my son!" And Christ said, "If you believe! All things are possible to him who believes!" To which the father tearfully replied, "I believe, but help my unbelief!"

Every one of us, from time to time, has faced physical situations that are terrifying. Sometimes they can be health problems, where our mortality is shoved in our face, "I could breathe one moment, and be dead the next." Sometimes it is a loss of a job. Sometimes our sins beset us, and just encompass us to where we just cannot seem to get out from under. We have marital problems, child-rearing situations, money problems, insurmountable problems. And because of the size of the problems, we have a lot of unbelief—"Help my unbelief!" We cannot see a way out; we have no control over the situation; perhaps that is exactly how God wants it, so that we do not have any control over the situation.

What do we do in a situation like this, when our belief is down? Certainly, there are physical things we can do to help us with our unbelief. We can start to take some action because when you take action to bring things unto control, you feel better.

One, you can get counsel. You can sit down with those who are involved in the area of your problem—the ministry, if that is to whom you should go. That is fine. If it is financial problems, and you know someone who is good financially, maybe sit down with them.

Second, ask God to show you what got you into the situation in the first place, and what lessons He wants you to learn from it. Track down things and see what put you into that situation. Was it laziness? Stupidity? Rebellion? A certain disease (which we should automatically know) and how it came about? Then, ask God to show you what steps you can take to do your part in correcting the problem.

Third, you have to have a real attitude change. If your problem is serious, you have got to be willing to change your attitude; be humble and obedient

to follow through with what needs to be done. Whatever it is! But that does not necessarily increase your faith. Changing your attitude may help you start to get a handle on it, but you may still have this problem with fear.

Turn to Romans 10.

Romans 10:13-17 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." 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? 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!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. So, your part of the problem's solution is to study into the power of God; coming to understand He has the ability and the power to correct the situation, remembering the utter sovereignty of God.

Study the psalms and see the power that God possesses! As the Model Prayer concludes, "Yours is the Kingdom, and the power, . . ." The power to correct; the power to heal; the power to do all we ask of God. You must study that.

I remember years ago when we got our first house. We did not have any money, and I went out and sold two houses. I had my real estate license, back in the day anybody could get a license. I sold two homes, and I took that money, and bought our first home's down payment.

The real estate lady I worked for (I am leading up to something), had a sister with this cat in her lap, and she was watching television. She might have been about 35 or 40. And the light reflected off the television onto the pupil of her eye. As the reflection of the picture changed, her cat reached up and swatted her eye with its claw. She went to the doctor the next day, and the doctor said not to worry, they would take care of it.

So they gave her the antibiotics, but she went blind in that one eye. They said not to worry, they will stop it. And then she went blind in her other eye. [Africans will tell you they are not worried about bite marks from big cats, but are afraid of the scratches from their claws, because of the rotten meat from their previous kills that linger under their claws.] She remained blind, and they could not repair it.

Where we are going is that, we were in our living room one night, and we had this kitten. And our granddaughter Jennifer reached down to get the cat, and the cat scratched her across the eye. Then I remembered this story. I think I anointed her at the time, and then I went into my office trembling. I did what we were reading about in Mark 9.

I sat down and started to read about the power of God. I tell you honestly. I could feel after two hours the fear draining away. I began to see God and not the scratch. Jennifer's eye was completely healed, and she was fine.

So, we must study in. We cannot just give it five minutes. We have to put our heart into it so that we believe in the power of God.

What is the work of God? What would God have us all do?

John 6:28-29 Then they [the Jews] said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

You see? That is what our work is. Believe is in the sense that we change our life. Because we believe on God, we do our study, we work on our marriages, we love our children, we love one another, we forgive everything.

We believe everything that Jesus Christ stands for, and God the Father in what we do. This is all encompassed in the word, *belief*.

Because we believe, because we trust, because we have faith in Jesus Christ, we keep the laws of God, [including] His Sabbath day, completely. This is why we faithfully keep the holy days; this is why we go to the Feast of Tabernacles. It is because of this belief that we pray, we study, we forgive

one another, we are faithful, we are diligent about protecting our spiritual foundation, and we work to love one another. This is what believing is all about.

Hebrews 11:1-6 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Hebrews 10:35-39 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: "For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." [That was God speaking. And now for us:] But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Therefore, let us not let our faith be shaken. Let nothing shake it. Let nothing shake your faith, your belief in God, which has great reward.