

The Warning Illustrated—Pray By Faith

James 1:6-7

9/12/1999

The book of James, first chapter. We'll read together verses 5 through 8. James, chapter 1, verses 5 through 8.

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

Now in this passage, James is giving us directions as to how we ought to approach God in prayer. Having encouraged us to ask God for wisdom, so that we may know how to best handle and respond to our trials that come into our lives, he also tells us *how* to ask, so that our requests will be granted. And so he warns us that not just any prayer will be accepted by God, and not just any prayer will be *granted* by God. There is a particular kind of prayer that is received and responded to by God, and there are others that are absolutely refused and rejected by Him. And so prayers that avail much are prayers that must be made in faith.

And so in our study together last Lord's Day evening, we considered together with regard to prayer, the warning stated. And that warning was found in verse 6, “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.” And so we considered first of all, the importance of faith, and saw that without faith, it is impossible to please God. A lack of faith is really an *insult* to God. It is a declaration that He lacks either the *truthfulness* to keep His promises, or He lacks the *power* to keep His promises, or He lacks the *wisdom* to keep His promises, or He lacks the *authority* to keep His promises.

On the other hand, prayers that are made with a distinct trust in God, as to His willingness and ability to answer them, are prayers that set forth the glory of God's person and His actions, and therefore they are prayers that avail much. By our confident trust in God, His power is engaged in our behalf.

Having considered together, then, last Lord's Day evening the *importance* of faith, we then considered what it means to pray in faith. And we looked at three elements that constituted praying in faith.

First of all, we saw to pray in faith meant to pray in *dependence* upon the grace and merit of Christ. It is belief in the merit and work of Christ in our behalf that enables us to pray with the confidence that God will hear and receive our prayers with favor and acceptance. If we doubt God's willingness to hear us, or we doubt that He *does* hear us because we are sinners, then we are really saying that we doubt the sufficiency of the work of Christ on our behalf to make us acceptable to God. To fail to believe that Christ's work makes us and our prayers acceptable to God is to *insult* both the work of Christ and gift of His Son by the Father. It is to despise the very *means* that God has devised to bring us into His presence and to declare that means to be entirely inadequate. Such an attitude will always and inevitably turn God's ear away from our prayers.

On the other hand, a true faith, which embraces with confidence the perfection and sufficiency of Christ's work on our behalf, and comes boldly in that confidence, prayers offered in that attitude will certainly be heard. It is precisely that confidence in the work of God's own Son that pleases God and engages God to answer our prayers.

And then we saw that to pray in faith means not only to pray with dependence on the grace and merit of Christ, we saw that to pray in faith means to pray with confidence in God's promises. If we have either a specific promise or a general promise of God, and we believingly plead it before God in relationship to our circumstances, then we are praying in faith. Prayers that are according to God's promises are prayers that are according to God's *will*. And if we *believe* those promises are true and will be fulfilled as we pray, then we *will have* the thing that we ask for. To pray according to God's promises, in God's word, with confidence that God will fulfill them, *is* to pray in faith.

And then thirdly, we saw that to pray in faith means to pray with reference to God's attributes. To pray in faith means that when we do not *know* what the will of God is in a situation, and we have no promise of God that particularly relates to that situation, then we plead before God what we *do* know, namely, His attributes of love and power and mercy and goodness and faithfulness and wisdom, in relationship to the situation. When we express confidence in God's characteristics and in God's abilities in relationship to our situation, then we are praying in faith. Well this, then, was the warning that was given, "Let him ask in faith."

Now today, this evening, we want to continue our message. And having considered together last Lord's Day the warning *issued*, today we want to consider together in the second place, the warning illustrated—the *warning* illustrated.

Now the warning is illustrated in the last part of verse 6 and in verse 7. It says in verse 6, "let him ask in faith, *nothing wavering*." Now when he says here that we are to have "nothing wavering," this word "waver" means to doubt; it means to stagger. It's the same word that is used in Acts 10 and verse 20, when those from Cornelius's household came to Peter and said, "We want you to come to Cornelius's household." God said to Peter in Acts 10:20, "Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing." The word "doubting" here is the same word as our word "wavering" in our text. And so Peter was in a quandary: Should I go with these men? Should I not go with these men? And so God says, Stop your wavering back and forth between whether you should go or not go, and go!

And so to waver is to vacillate between belief and doubt as to God's willingness and God's ability to keep His promises. It is to have a lack of consistency in our confidence in God. In Romans, chapter 4, in verse 20, it says of Abraham, "He staggered not." This is our same Greek word for wavering. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief." You see, an unbelieving person is one who vacillates, and when God brings a promise, he doesn't know whether to go forward in the confidence of that promise, or to go backwards in being overwhelmed and uncertain of that promise. And so to waver, then, is to doubt and to stagger at God's promises, to be uncertain and to be unsure of their validity.

Now the illustration here that is given is that of a wind-driven wave that is tossed back and forth. Notice the remainder of verse 6, “For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.” Now when you spend any time at the ocean, you realize that the waves go where the wind goes. And if the wind is from the east, the waves are from the east, and if the wind is from the west, the waves are from the west. And the wind shifts westward, the waves go westward; the wind shifts eastward, the waves go eastward. And so the waves shift around as often as the wind shifts around, and are as inconsistent in their direction as the wind itself is. And so this man that is being described in this passage shifts about from doubt to confidence, and back to doubt again. He is not sure what to believe. His confidence in God is as unstable as water.

Now in contrast to this instability of confidence and conviction, the Christian is everywhere instructed to repudiate doubt and to remain firm and constant in his faith in God’s promises. In First Timothy, chapter 2, and verse 8, Paul says, “I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” In other words, when we pray, we are not, among other things, to have any doubt in our hearts. And the word here, “nothing doubting,” means without debate, without dispute. We’re not sitting there in our hearts asking ourselves, “Now did God really mean what He said here, and is this really true, and does this really apply to me, and can it be for me?”

The pride that exists within us will cause our reason to question and to debate of the validity of God’s promises, or of His willingness to apply them to us as individuals. Reason comes up and says, “How can this be true?” The evidence of reality and circumstance seems to indicate otherwise. But you see, it is the sound belief in God’s attributes that is the antidote to wavering. This is what gave Abraham stability. What God had promised, He was able also to perform. Abraham *knew* that, and it was precisely that that was the tool that was used to *combat* this insipient unbelief and this wavering with reference to this phenomenal promise, really, that God had made to Abraham.

Now, turn in your Bibles please, if you will for a moment, to Luke, chapter 18. In this passage, we have instruction with reference to this matter of instability and wavering, with reference to prayer. Luke, chapter 18, beginning at verse 1. It says, “And he,” that is Jesus, “spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint”—that is, not to give up, not to quit out of doubt and uncertainty as to whether God would ever hear and respond with reference to His promises regarding prayer—“Saying,” verse 2, “There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless”—now here’s the question—“when the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?”

Now what we have in this parable, or this story, is the illustration of this woman—a woman who did not doubt that she would get an answer to her request, even in the face of an *indifferent* and an *unjust* judge. She did not doubt that she would have an answer to her request, and so she was going to come continually until she got it, in the confidence that she would get it. And if she

could have faith and confidence that her prayers were going to be answered, even by such a person as *this*, and she wasn't going to quit, and she wasn't going to give up and lose faith, then how much less should we, who have a just and a compassionate judge, one who is *quick* and ready and willing to avenge His elect—that is, to answer their prayers with reference to the injustices that happen to *them*—though He bear long with them?

And He asks this poignant question. He says, Nevertheless, even though God speedily answers our prayers, when the Son of man comes, will He find faith on the earth, or will He find doubt? And will He find people who are confident that, yes, God is a God who answers prayer, and if I ask I will receive, and if I seek I will find, and if I knock it *shall* be opened to me? And I may have to persevere in that for a bit, but God is speedy in His answers, and I can have confidence in that. Will He find people with that disposition, or will He find people, after they've prayed once or twice for a day or two, giving up and quitting? You see, the lesson is in verse 1—Men ought always to pray and not to give up. And the reason why people give up is because they are filled with doubts as to the usefulness, validity, and the efficacy of prayer—that is, that prayer actually *works*.

And so if this woman believed that *her* requests are going to work in the face of an unjust judge, then how much more should we be exercising faith and not doubting that *our* prayers will work, in the face of a very *just* judge, who loves His people and who speedily responds to them?

So this, then, is the warning illustrated. It is illustrated by this instability, this back-and-forth business. And what Jesus is telling us, and what James is telling us, is that there should not be this inconsistency, this going back and forth in our lives as to whether prayer works, and as to whether or not we should persevere *in* it.

Notice, then, in the third place this evening, having seen the warning given last Lord's Day, and the warning illustrated, moments ago, consider thirdly, the warning enforced—the warning enforced. Now the warning is enforced in verse 7. It says, "For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." Now why is it important that we should ask in faith? Why *must* we repudiate doubts? Why must we be constant in our faith? Well the answer is, is because if *do* not repudiate our doubts, and we *are* not constant in our faith, then we will have fruitless, vain, and ineffectual prayers.

You see, if James says, Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, but if you do waver, you'll still get an answer to your prayer, then what incentive would we ever have to exercise faith in our prayers? If doubting prayers are answered just as much as prayers offered in faith, then why bother to exercise faith, because faith is difficult to exercise? It goes contrary oftentimes to sight and to reason, to human inclination. Well James provides us with an *enforcement* of this warning, and what he says is, if you don't ask in faith, your prayers are not going to be answered—even your prayers for wisdom. Now even though we have a specific promise—if we ask of God wisdom, He will give to us liberally—yet if that prayer is not made in faith, God *won't* give us wisdom.

Now let me ask you a question. Can you *live* with no answers to your prayers? Can you live with not receiving anything from the Lord? Well, if you can't—and I hope you realize you can't—then you need to take this matter of asking in faith seriously. This is a very severe

sanction and penalty for unbelief—no answers to prayer. But it is an absolutely *certain* sanction, and it's one that we must take seriously.

Jesus says here, "Let not this man think." He's saying, Don't think—don't tell yourself that it doesn't matter if you doubt. It matters intensely. Do not deceive yourself regarding this issue. Do not deceive yourself with a vain surmise that you will receive what you ask if you do not believe God's character or God's promises regarding what you ask. And what God is saying is that the least of His mercies are too good for unbelievers. He simply will not give them to them.

Now how could we, as the people of God, ever hope to live without being able to draw down from heaven and receive for ourselves power and wisdom and help from God? How could we ever *live*? Well the answer is, we could not. To be left merely to our *own* resources without *any* help from God—that would be to be left in a desperate condition indeed. We would be in the same condition that all the unbelievers are out there, without help, without hope, and without God. That is the condition of the Christian who is faithless, or doubts with reference to the promises and the characteristics of God.

Notice if you will, Matthew, chapter 13, verses 54 through 58. In Matthew, chapter 13, beginning at verse 54, it says, "And when he," Jesus, "was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, inasmuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is it not the carpenter's son? is it not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended at him. But Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and in his own house." Now notice verse 58, "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

Now I think it's unfortunate but true, that oftentimes it would have to be said with reference to the Lord Jesus, that He is not without honor except in His own country and in His own house. And what is His country and His house today? Is it not the church? And how often do we fail to honor Him, and how often do we *dishonor* Him by simply not, as the people of God, *believing* what He says, and because we *do* not believe, He does not many mighty works among us? And if we would have our prayers consistently and faithfully answered, then we must be consistent *in* our faith towards God. We must not doubt. We must persevere in those prayers, not staggering in unbelief, but being *fully persuaded* that what God has promised, He is able also to do. And as a church, we need to apply ourselves to that. And I think one of the greatest marks of *unbelief* and doubting is simply that we don't pray—that prayer is something that is low and inconsequential on our priority list.

Now you may be sitting here saying, Boy, I really need to have faith. How can I have more faith and not doubt so much as I do, and not vacillate and go back and forth—will He, won't He, will He, won't He—but be strong in faith, giving glory to God? Well, I think the example of this man in Mark, chapter 9, verses 14 through 24, sets the pattern for us. Here was an individual whose son had a deaf and dumb spirit. And he brought his son to the disciples, and they could not heal him. And this demon was so destructive that he tore this man, or this boy, and he foamed and gnashed with his teeth and wasted away.

And this man had brought this boy to Jesus' disciples, Mark 9:18, "And I spoke to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not." Then Jesus says in verse 19, "He answered him, and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I endure you? bring him unto me." And you see, Jesus looked either at the faith of His disciples or at the faith of this man, and the lack of it was a source of consternation and frustration to Him. It's like, How much proof do I have to offer before you guys are going to believe? That's in essence what He's saying here.

In verse 20, "And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tore him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked the father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us"—" *If* thou canst do anything. You see, this guy wasn't sure if Jesus could do it or *not*. Now you remember, this is the opposite of the attitude of the leper in Matthew, chapter 8, when he says, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." And this guy says, Well, *if* you can do it, please do it.

Now notice Jesus' response, verse 23. "Jesus said unto him, If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes." And the clear implication is, Look, if you don't believe, forget it. Your son is *not* going to be delivered. Verse 24, "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Was that good enough? Notice, verse 25, "When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose."

I think the example of this man is a good example for us to follow. Sometimes we're praying along and doubts enter into our hearts and we say, Oh, Lord, I believe. Help thou my unbelief. And you know, that simple desire for strengthening of faith is sufficient to move the hand of Christ to work a mighty miracle on behalf of this man, of whom God had just said previously, "O faithless generation," who had just said, If you can do anything—I'm not sure if you can, but if you can. And then there's this little glimmer of faith, and that's all that was needful, as this man humbly cried out to the Lord to help his unbelief.

And so if we see that unbelief is keeping us from having answer to prayer, and we wonder, How can I fix this? Well just go to the Lord about it, and just say, Lord, I have these doubts. There's no reason for them, there's no basis for them, but Lord, you know they're there. I confess them to you as sin. God, forgive me of them and help my unbelief. Strengthen my faith. And many times the disciples went to Jesus and said, Lord, increase our faith. And what an appropriate prayer for us to be praying.

In John, chapter 11, verses 38 through 40, Jesus was at the tomb of Lazarus, and He came to the tomb "and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, said unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he has been dead four days. Jesus said unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou would believe, thou would see the glory of God?" And you know what she did next? She said, Take away the stone. What was that? It was a manifestation that she *did* believe. She acted in belief upon His promise. And what happened? Out comes Lazarus.

And so you see, the warning is enforced, both positively and negatively. If we *don't* doubt, what happens? Our prayers are answered. And if we *do* doubt, what happens? No answer to prayer. And so when our faith is weak, we need to pray to the Lord—Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief.

And that brings us to our fourth and final point this evening. Having considered together the warning given, the warning illustrated, the warning enforced, notice finally, the warning concluded—the warning concluded.

Now the warning concluded is contained in verse 8. It says, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” Now this could also be translated, He *is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. In other words, it's a concluding description of this doubting, vacillating, tossed, unbelieving individual. And so he concludes with a final assessment of the state and condition of the faithless man, and he says two things of him: number one, he's double-minded; and number two, he's unstable.

Consider together, first of all, that he is double-minded. What this simply means is that he is a man of a divided heart. The word double-minded here literally means one of two souls. Part of him wants to go *this* way, and the other part of him wants to go *that* way. One part is disposed to lean on himself, and * the world, the other part of him is disposed to seek God and look for help from Him.

Now notice if you will, James, chapter 4. In James, chapter 4, and verse 4, notice the vacillation that is described in the moral behavior of these people to whom James is writing. James 4, verses 4 through 8. He says, “You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do you think that the scripture says in vain, The spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy? But he gives more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore unto God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded.”

What he is saying here is this double-mindedness that is spoken of in verse 8 is the cause and foundation of all the previous behaviors described in verses 4 and following. The reason why they couldn't make up their mind between the world and God, and they were going back and forth, is because they were double-minded. And the reason why they were envious of the things of the world is because they were double-minded. The reason why they were sometimes submitting themselves to God, and sometimes not; sometimes they were proud, sometimes they were humble; sometimes they drew near to God, sometimes they didn't—all of this was a result of being double-minded.

And so the question of Elijah on Mount Carmel is still valid to this very day, when in First Kings 18:21, he says, How long do you halt between two opinions? If the Lord is God, serve him. And if Baal is god, serve him. But stop this business of going back and forth between God and the world, and the devil and God, and the flesh and God, and make up your mind whose servants you are.

There's an interesting passage in Second Kings, chapter 17. You might want to turn there in your Bibles. Second Kings, chapter 17. We'll read together verses 24 through 33. After Assyria had come and taken away the people of the northern kingdom, the land needed to be repopulated. Second Kings 17:24. It says, "[T]he king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria in the place of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof. And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not Jehovah: therefore the Lord sent lions among them, which slew some of them. Wherefore they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which you have removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he has sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land. Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom you brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land. Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the Lord."

What an opportunity! But notice: "Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt. And the men of Babylon made Succothbenoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima, And the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim."

Verse 32, "So they feared the Lord, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. They feared the Lord, and served their own gods." Is that double-mindedness, or what? We don't want the lions, so let's bring Jehovah in and we'll add him to all of our gods so that He can be appeased; but we're not going to serve Him with a whole heart, much less a single heart. We're going to serve the Lord and our own gods as well.

If you skip to verse 34, it says, "Unto this day"—speaking of the Samaritans in Israel—"they do after the former manners: they fear not the Lord, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the Lord commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel..." Now skip down to verse 41. It says, "So these nations feared the Lord, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, as they do unto this day." Now you remember when Jesus met the woman at the well in Samaria? This is what she was, right here. And that's why Jesus says, You know not what you worship. We know what we worship.

The point is, is that Samaritan worship is double-minded worship. And he may be called a Samaritan to this day who tries to serve both the Lord and the world; both the Lord and the flesh; both the Lord and the devil; both the Lord and popular acceptance; both the Lord and fashion; both the Lord and the movies.

Hosea, chapter 10, verses 1 and 2, says, “Israel is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit unto himself.... Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty.” You know, when the Lord finds fault with you, it’s because your heart is divided. And if there’s one thing God won’t tolerate, it’s a divided heart. These people, these Samaritans and the Israelites at times, could not decide. They could not make up their mind who they were going to serve. And you know, when we pray with a lack of faith, that’s exactly the kind of people we are—double-minded—because we can’t up our mind if we’re going to really trust God or not. And if we’re going to trust God, then we need to trust him whole-hog, or we need to not bother to trust Him at all. It’s as simple as that.

But in this warning that he concludes with, he not only assesses the state and condition of the man who is vacillating as being double-minded, he also says of him that he is “unstable in all of his ways.” Now what this is saying is, it goes back to the illustration of the wind and the waves and the sea, and the instability of the water. You know, it’s bad enough when Jesus used the parable of folks trying to build their house on the sand, right? Imagine trying to build it on the *lake*—talk about an unstable foundation.

And so he says that these people who vacillate in their faith, who are wavering, are people who are unstable in *all* of their ways. That is, this instability is universal. You can’t have this real stable life all over here, and then over here, be unstable in terms of your confidence and commitment to God. You know, when you look at people whose lives are chaos, the reason why is because they’re unstable in their commitment to the Lord. They’re double-minded.

And so here’s a person whose life is terribly inconsistent—constantly going from one opinion to the next. He wants to serve both God and self; he *fears* both man and God; he is full of *unfulfilled* intentions, hesitation, inconsistency, changeableness, and indecision. His fitfulness and inconstancy betray the divided heart that he possesses. And as a result, he never goes far, he never accomplishes much because he cannot make up his mind where he is going, or what or who he is following.

Now in contrast to this, the blessed man, the righteous man, the stable man, is the man whose heart is fixed. Notice if you will, Psalm 112. Psalm 112, verses 1 through 8 says, “Praise ye the Lord. Blessed is the man that fears the Lord, and that delights greatly in his commandments.” Well, that’s an interesting fellow. “His seed shall be mighty upon the earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed.” Here is a person who not only fears God and delights in His commandment, but his descendants are mighty upon the earth; his generation is blessed. “Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness will endure forever. Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness”—this guy’s not stumbling around in the dark—“he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. A good man shows favor, and lends: he will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings...” And why do all of these blessings come to him? Notice the next phrase, “His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.” And the next verse, “His heart is *established*, he shall not be afraid, until he sees desire upon his enemies.” He has dispersed; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn shall be exalted with honor.

All of these things are ascribed to one thing—*his heart is fixed*. He's not double-minded. You see people who go far in the things of God and in the blessing of God and in conformity to Christ—what's the root cause of all of that? Because he made up his mind a long time ago at Mount Carmel, if the Lord be God, serve Him.

And so Joshua called the people. He said, Choose you this day whom you will serve. Make up your mind. If you're going to serve Jehovah, serve Him. If you're going to serve the gods on the other side of the river, serve them. But don't—don't do this two-timing stuff.

And so, we must be a people who are not unstable, but rather a people whose heart is fixed, a people whose heart is established with reference to who we serve, who we have confidence in, and therefore, where we're going and why we're doing it. And we must pray with David, in Psalm 86, and verse 11, when he says, "Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name."

David struggled with a divided heart, like we all do, all of us, but at times—wanting to go the way of the world for a little while, and then we want to go the way of the Lord for a little, and then we want to go the way of the flesh for a while, and then back to the way of the Lord. And we sense that our heart is not perfectly unified. What do we do? Well we go to the Lord, and we say, Lord, unite my heart to fear your name. Take those pieces that are scattered and divided and tie them all together, and set them in *one* direction, and don't allow me to go to the right or the left.

And so this, then, is the warning concluded. We need to avoid being both double-minded and unstable. And the way that we can avoid double-mindedness and instability is to do all that we can to develop and strengthen our faith. We can certainly go to the Lord and say, Lord, I believe. Help thou my unbelief. But the Bible also tells us in Romans 10:17 that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. And you know, if you're serious about being a man or a woman of consistent faith, then you'll spend a great deal of time reading the word of God—which *brings* faith.

You know, oftentimes we wonder, Why is my faith so weak? Well, how much time do you spend reading God's word, thoughtfully and meditatively? You know, if the Christian church would spend just as much time reading their Bibles as they do watching movies, there would be a stunning revival of faith. But I fear that most people spend ten times as much time watching the boob-tube as they do opening the Bible and reading it. And if you're concerned about not having a divided heart, you need to turn that box off and toss it out and open your Bible and spend some time reading it, and you'll find your faith *marvelously* strengthened. And maybe you don't have a box, but you have other distractions. Do you put them ahead of reading God's word? You read God's word, and you'll find yourself being *increasingly* single-minded—single-minded, single-minded—more and more and more, as that book becomes the whole frame of reference within which you operate, and according to which you think.

May the Lord, then, help us to take seriously this warning that we might be a church and a people who have our prayers answered and not refused, because they are asked in faith. Shall we pray together?

Father, there is every reason to have confidence in you. And yet, Father, everything about us and the world around us, and in the remaining sin within us, would draw us away from that confidence and would insert into our hearts and affections *unjust* doubts of you. Father, your Son was entirely right to express disgust that we would be a faithless generation, and to ask in despair, Would He find faith upon the earth? Oh, Father, may He find faith in us. May we not be a faithless generation, but may we *believe*, for all things are possible to him that believeth.

Father, may our prayers be prayers asked in faith, nothing wavering. And, Lord, may you increase our faith by the direct and personal operation of your Spirit upon our hearts in uniting them from the divisions that so easily beset them, but also through a frequent and faithful and consistent reading and meditating upon the word of God. Lord, help us to be people of faith. And may it be said of us, as it was of the Canaanitish, “Oh, woman, great is thy faith. Be it unto thee according as thou wilt.” We ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.