



No Growth - Unbelief

And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

Mark 9:24

Uncertainty - Matthew 14:31

Negligent - James 4:17

Bitter - James 3:11

Eyes - Ezekiel 12:2

Lifestyle - 2 Timothy 4:4

Influence - Galatians 5:7

Ears - Psalms 135:17

Faithless - John 20:27

Unbelief can happen to anyone at any time, whether they are an believer or an unbeliever. It does not matter if a person is a church-goer for years, does great missionary work, helping the poor and unfortunate, or volunteers in various projects in and out of the church. Unbelief can creep in unawares in any situation, affecting that individual and potentially those within their environment. The word "Unbelief" occurs sixteen times in the New Testament and the Old Testament, with no record. However, there are many examples of disbelief from those olden days, starting with the Garden of Eden, Noah's Ark, the parting of the Red Sea, and Lot's wife, to name a few.

In this life, for believers, our faith may sometimes be mixed with doubt. This weakness does not mean, however, that Christ will not respond to our petitions, for He understands and sympathises with our weaknesses, as in Hebrews four, verse fifteen.

We should confess our lack of faith and pray that He would give us the faith that is needed. The poor man in the theme verse of Mark nine, verse twenty-four, had brought his child to the disciples and found them unable to do anything with him. A torrent of appeal breaks from his lips as soon as the Lord gives him an opportunity of speaking. Jesus gives him back his doubts. The father said, 'If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us.' Christ's answer, 'If Thou canst,' that is certain. All things are possible to thee' (not to do, but to get) 'if'-which is the only 'if' in the case-'thou believest. I can, and if thy faith lays hold on My Omnipotence, all is done.'

There are many ways to the temple, and it matters little by which of them a man travels, if so be he gets there. There is no royal road to the Christian faith that saves the soul. There are three elements here: eager desire, the sense of utter helplessness, and the acceptance of Christ's calm assurances. Look at these three.

This poor man knew what he wanted, and he wanted it very sorely. Whosoever has any intensity and reality of desire for the great gifts which Jesus Christ comes to bestow, has taken at least one step on the way to faith. Conversely, the hindrances that block the path of many of us are simply that we do not care to possess the blessings that Jesus Christ, in His Gospel, offers. The real reason why many did not trust in Jesus Christ is that they did not care to possess the blessings Jesus Christ brings.

Do you desire to have your sins forgiven? Does purity have any attraction for you? Do you care at all about the calm and pure blessings of communion with God? Would you like to live always in the light of His face? Do you want to be masters of your own lusts and passions?

I do not ask you, "Do you want to go to Heaven or to escape Hell when you die?" What Christian teachers have to fight against is that we are charged for offering people a blessing that they do not want, and have to create a demand before there can be any acceptance of the supply. 'Give us the leeks and garlicks of Egypt,' said the Hebrews in the wilderness; 'our soul loatheth this light bread.' So it is with many of us. We do not want God,

goodness, quietness of conscience, purity of life, self-consecration to a lofty ideal, one-thousandth part as much as we want success in our daily occupations, or someone or other of the delights that the world gives. Can you forgive your own sins? Can you cleanse your own nature? Can you make yourselves other than you are by any effort of volition, or by any painfulness of discipline? If we understand what is required to bring one soul into harmony and fellowship with God, we shall recognise that we ourselves can do nothing to save and little to help ourselves.

The coin, as it were, has its two faces. On the one, is written, 'Trust in the Lord'; on the other is written, 'Nothing in myself.'

Unbelief is like turning from sweetness to the bitter. "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?" We are taught to dread an unruly tongue as one of the greatest evils. The affairs of mankind are thrown into confusion by the tongues of men. Every age of the world, and every condition of life, private or public, affords examples of this. Hell has more to do in promoting the fire of the tongue than men generally think; and whenever men's tongues are employed in sinful ways, they are set on fire of hell. No man can tame the tongue without Divine grace and assistance. The chapter of "the demonic boy cured," may sound a bit bitter when Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child." The boy's father may have responded bitterly in light of what happened earlier when the disciples were unable to remove the demonic spirit in verse eighteen. "And I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not."

Unbelief can affect a person by what they see. The father of the uncured boy was among the great multitude, along with the scribes, as in verse fourteen of Mark nine. Jesus came down from the mountain in verse nine, from the same chapter, and saw His disciples with the multitude around them and the scribes questioning them. The father of the uncured boy came out from the multitude and described the situation about his son to Jesus. Unbelief can occur from an unfortunate result. The boy's father spoke to Jesus and said from verse seventeen, "Master, I have brought unto

thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not." The boy's father did not expect the outcome to be the way it turned out when the disciples failed to perform the miracle of curing his son from the demonic attack. The result could have created disbelief in the boy's father, increasing his unbelief.

Why couldn't the disciples drive out the demons? Lifestyle: the behaviour towards God and others; this also includes habits and the way of acting. In verse twenty-eight, "And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting. Jesus does not mean that a "time-out" for prayer was necessary before this kind of evil spirit could be driven out. Rather, a principle is implied here: where there is little faith, there is little prayer. Where there is much prayer and intimacy with God, coupled with a life of love and obedience to God and His Word, there is much faith and spiritual authority.

The twelve disciples, like believers today, have flaws. Judas betrayed Jesus in Mark three, verse nineteen, Peter denied Him and the cock crew thrice, as told in Luke twenty-two, verse sixty-one, and finding them sleeping in Gethsemane instead of praying in Mark fourteen, verse thirty-seven. These examples are proof of the disciples' reason for not being able to remove that demonic spirit from the poor man's son.

The boy's father came from the multitude, which included the scribes who questioned the disciples. Imagine the impact of both groups upon him? The scribes, the religious class that followed the Son of God, this group that questions and casts doubt by their perspective, could have influenced the boy's father to unbelief by their conversations. The multitude could have some doubters, unbelievers, negative speakers, who knows. However, the boy's father was among them and may have seen the negative reaction from them concerning the cure for his son, which

may have contributed to his response in the key verse of Mark nine, verse twenty-four. Unbelief can cause people to hear and still not have belief. In Mark nine, verse fifteen, "And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him." The father of the suffering youth was among the multitude that saw Jesus coming to aid His disciples. They were overwhelmed at his sudden appearance among them and received Him with the customary marks of affection and respect. However, before the Son of God appeared to them, the boy's father must have heard some of the miracles that Jesus did through the multitude.

Yet, Jesus repeated the man's words in the latter part of verse twenty-two, with His response in the following verse twenty-three, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Jesus seemed sad as He rebuked the man. The bottom of Matthew twelve, verse thirty-four, "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." All that this poor man heard from the multitude or disciples, his words again were, "but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." Did he not realise who Jesus is? Unbelief is being faithless. That is a person having no faith. Like how the poor man began his words to Jesus, "but if thou canst do any thing."

Unbelief is faithless. That is a person having no faith. Like how the poor man began his words to Jesus, "but if thou canst do any thing." Faithless is no faith at all, and no prayer life. The approach of the son's father is important as to where his faith stands.

The boy's father comes out from the multitude and tells Jesus his son's condition, then describes the experiences of it, and concludes with the disciples' failure to cast the demonic spirit out. "He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me, as in Mark nine, verse nineteen. The boy's father's actions and words indicate no faith at all. Did not say, "God can," or "I believe," nothing. Only going through the motions of what happened, what didn't happen, and why it is not happening.

The father of the suffering youth reflected on the want of power in the disciples. But Christ will have him reckon the disappointment to the want of faith. For believers, much is promised in believing. If thou canst believe, there is the possibility that thy hard heart may be softened, thy spiritual diseases may be cured; and, weak as thou art, thou mayest be able to hold out to the end. However, those who complain of unbelief must look up to Christ for grace to help them against it, and his grace will be sufficient for them. Whom Christ cures, he cures effectually.

However, when Satan is unwilling to be driven from those who have long been his slaves, and when he cannot deceive or destroy the sinner, he will cause him all the terror that he can. The disciples must not think to do their work always with the same ease; some services call for more than ordinary pains. The boy's father must aid himself in his unbelief for his situation to change, and not just for someone to do it. How can someone expect change if their approach does not expect it, but only to witness it?