



This Kind Pt 2: Because of Your Unbelief!

September 26, 2021

Holy Text: Matthew 17:14-21 (Emphasis on Verse 20)

- Last week, by God's grace, we prayerfully "learned from failure:" the disciples inability to cast the devil out of the poor young man in our Text.
- We used the events in our narrative to hopefully inspire us all to:
 1. Acknowledge our failures. Do not act as if nothing happened!
 2. Examine our failures. Where did things go wrong and why?
 3. Take responsibility for our failures. If at fault, do not point fingers.
 4. Repent of our failures. Apologize for any sins or misunderstandings.
 5. Forgive others' failures. Why? Because you have been forgiven!
 6. Grow out of our failures intentionally. Adjust and commit to different patterns going forward.
 7. Give all glory to Christ despite our failures! He forgives and heals us!
- Today, let us dive into in the issue identified by Jesus as one of the root causes of their failure: **unbelief**.

What is Unbelief?

Matthew 17:20 (KJV) *And Jesus said unto them, **Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.***

1. The word translated "unbelief" in the KJV is *apistia* in Greek. It means, according to Thayer's Dictionary:
 - unfaithfulness, faithless
 - want of faith, unbelief
 - weakness of faith
2. *Apistia* is used 12 times in the KJV, always translated as "unbelief," and always with a negative connotation. For example:
 - In Jesus hometown of Nazareth

Mark 6:1-6 (KJV) *And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. 2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. 4 But Jesus said unto them, **A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.** 5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. 6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.*
 - The Disciples after Jesus' Resurrection

Mark 16:14-15 (KJV) *Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not*

them which had seen him after he was risen. 15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

- Paul, concerning the unbelief of the Jews
Romans 11:20-21 (KJV) *Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: 21 For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.*
- Paul's personal testimony
1 Timothy 1:12-13 (KJV) *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; 13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*
- The writer of Hebrews
Hebrews 3:12 (KJV) *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

3. Unbelief, in the purest sense of the word, can be on a spectrum...

- Atheism: Not believing there is a God
- Paganism: Not believing the Jesus Christ is God the Son and Savior
- Maturity/hurt: Not believing obedience to Scripture can change things
- Doctrine: Not believing in the power of God to heal
- Self-Doubt: Not believing one is in the will of God in one's actions

4. The kind of unbelief expressed by the disciples might have been what Charles Spurgeon called, "The Sin of Unbelief." In a sermon he preached in 1855 on the man who did not believe the prophet Elisha, and died as a result (2 Kings 7:19), Spurgeon said of unbelief:

Virtues without faith are whitewashed sins. Obedience without faith, if it is possible, is a gilded disobedience. Not to believe, nullifies everything. It is the fly in the ointment; it is the poison in the pot. Without faith, with all the virtues of purity, with all the benevolence of philanthropy, with all the kindness of disinterested sympathy, with all the talents of genius, with all the bravery of patriotism, and with all the decision of principle—"without faith it is impossible to please God." Do you not see then, how bad unbelief is, because it prevents men from performing good works. Yea, even in Christians themselves, unbelief disables them.

5. Bishop J.C. Ryle, in his Expository Thoughts on the Gospels (1856), says our Text is...

a striking example of the weakening effect of unbelief. The disciples anxiously inquired of our Lord, when they saw the devil yielding to his power, "Why weren't we able to cast it out?" They received an answer full of the deepest instruction--"because you have so little faith." Would they know the secret of their own sad failure in the hour of need? It was lack of faith.

Let us ponder this point well, and learn wisdom. Faith is the key to success in the Christian warfare. Unbelief is the sure road to defeat. Once let our faith languish and

decay, and all our graces will languish with it. Courage, patience, long-suffering, and hope, will soon wither and dwindle away. Faith is the root on which they all depend. The same Israelites who at one time went through the Red Sea in triumph, at another time shrunk from danger, like cowards, when they reached the borders of the promised land. Their God was the same who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. Their leader was that same Moses who had wrought so many wonders before their eyes. But their faith was not the same. They gave way to shameful doubts of God's love and power. "They could not enter in because of unbelief." (Heb. 3:19.)

6. Recall how the LORD Jesus framed this failure:

- **Matthew 17:16-17 (KJV)** And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. **17** Then Jesus answered and said, *O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.*
- **Matthew 17:16-17 (NLT)** So I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn't heal him." **17** Jesus said, "You faithless and corrupt people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me."
- He, speaking to the crowd, and surely, the disciples too, called them "faithless and perverse!"
- Perverse is *diastrephō* in Greek. It means "to distort, to oppose, to turn aside from the right path, to corrupt."
- Apparently the disciples did not understand faith! They had a wrong perception of it or had turned aside from it. Remember, this wasn't that long from their failure...

Matthew 10:1 (KJV) And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power *against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.*

Luke 9:1-6 (KJV) Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. **2** And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. **3** And he said unto them, *Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. 4* And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. **5** And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them. **6** And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.

7. All they needed was "Mustard seed faith" to move mountains!

Things we would do well to consider about this faith analogy:

- A mustard seed is small: if your faith is in the God of the Bible, you don't need much!
- A mustard seed is "pungent" to the taste: true faith requires some adjustment to our preferences!
- A mustard seed is a stimulant: although it tastes bad, it enables!
- A mustard seed is powerful: it is small but produces a really tall plant/tree!
- A mustard seed is a seed: it must be planted in good soil/die to produce life!

Mark 11:22-23 (KJV) And Jesus answering saith unto them, *Have faith in God. 23* For verily I say unto you, *That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast*

into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

Let us Review of Biblical Faith!

Every three years since 2012, our LORD has prompted this review (2012 from Mark 9:14-29, 2015 from James 2:14, 2018 from Matthew 9:27-31, and today!) It must be important!

1. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Why? For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Heb 11:6)
 - Faith is a non-negotiable of the Christian Way, and our God loves it.
 - It is akin to coming to Him as little children, believing, hoping, trusting, and knowing that our Father loves us and wants the best for us. (Matt 18:3)
2. We must also remember that we are fighting a **spiritual war**. And this war is ugly, vicious, and out to blaspheme Christ's Name and destroy Christian foundations. This too requires we fight the good fight of faith. (1 Tim 6:12) Sadly...
 - Too many people trivialize the nature of faith. It has become too personal and less Kingdom-oriented. Too much of our believing God is about personal prosperity rather than the defeat of against demons and devils and the advancement of God's truth.
 - As John MacArthur rightly put it, "To ask in Jesus' Name does not mean to tack such an expression on the end of a prayer as a mere formula. It means: 1) the believer's prayer should be for God's purposes and Kingdom and not selfish reasons; 2) the believer's prayer should be on the basis of God's merits and not any personal merit or worthiness; and 3) the believer's prayer should be in pursuit of His glory alone."
 - Of course there is nothing wrong with laying our petitions before God, but the key is our **motive**. Is it for His glory? Is it for the Kingdom? Is it to display His wonder before unbelievers?
 - Without this understanding of faith, God becomes our personal waiter instead of the King of Kings who commands an advancing army for His own glory! Look at a primary direction for faith:
 - **Ephesians 6:10-13 (KJV)** *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*
3. We must understand our own **limitations**.
 - In fact, understanding this is key to living a life of faith. Why?
 - Have you every bumped into your own limitations? Have you ever realized that you couldn't do it (whatever "it" is) on your own? Are you honest enough to admit that you need the power of Jesus Christ in your life each day?
 - I know this is contrary to popular teaching, but understanding your own frailty is **fundamental** to biblical faith!
 - **Understanding that we are nothing and that He is everything is foundational to biblical faith, and as a result, pleasing and glorifying our Lord!**
 - **John 15:5-8 (KJV)** *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them*

into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. 8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

4. From the place of limitation, we can rightly embrace **biblical** faith.
 - We must first understand that “we are NOT, but HE IS.” This is the first step of faith.
 - True faith towards God is rooted in brokenness, humility, and in a desire for His will. Then we can approach Him with right understanding...
 - **1 John 5:14-15 (KJV)** *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: 15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*
5. Biblical Faith **asks, believes, and trusts!**
 - Here is the process, and you’ll find this totally true if you are honest:
 1. We **ask** God for what we desire of Him...
 2. We **believe** (know in our hearts and minds) that God can do anything...
 3. And we **trust** in His complete and total sovereignty over any situation!
6. **Unbelief fails** in one of these elements. It might refuse to ask, or fail to “know” that God is truly able, or negate the “trusting” of God, which many times unknowingly says, “Lord, I don’t trust you to do what is best for me!”
 - Unbiblical faith refuses to acknowledge that in our asking and believing, sometimes God says **no**. This friends, requires trust!
 - Even our LORD prayed, *"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."* (Mat 26:39) How can that then be an unbiblical prayer?
 - Unbiblical faith often finds its impetus in selfishness or in more difficult cases, pain and desperation. But here is a clue: even in one’s pain, *you know a thought is trending away from Scripture when it exalts the desires of man over the desires of God Himself.*
 - **Therefore biblical faith does not trust in anything worldly or man-centered; biblical faith ultimately finds its root in a firm trust in a loving, sovereign God.**
7. Biblical faith embraces the **sovereignty** of God.
 - The truth is that faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. " (Heb 11:1). The word "evidence" is from the Greek *hupostasis*, which simply means "a confidence." True faith simply knows that God has a plan, agreeing that His plan is best, and trusting in Him fully for the execution of His plan, not ours. I love the way Solomon put it:
 - *Proverbs 3:5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (KJV)*
 - This is critical, because many times, we ask “wrongly, to spend it on our passions” (James 4:3).
 - So it is not what we want, but what He wants. That is faith. Living a life of complete surrender requires extreme levels of faith. Interestingly, when we read the rest of Hebrews 11 and examine what the heroes of faith trusted God for; we find without exception that God's will (not their own) was their priority.
 - And just as interesting, we find that although some prospered in their circumstances, some “*died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were*

persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” (Heb 11:13).

- *Others “...were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” (Hebrews 11:35-40, KJV)*

Final thoughts and Family Worship Suggestions:

We are in a time where walking in unbelief is very easy. We are also in a time where understanding biblical faith is critical.

Family,

Proverbs 3:5-7 (KJV) *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. 7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.*

Amen!

This week:

1. Think through areas of your life where there are fears and doubts. Be honest.
2. Don't be afraid to ask God...to petition Him according to His will.
3. Press into true believing...to know that God is able!
4. Trust Him! Be totally confident in the power and will of God!
5. Help you children do the same!