

NORTHEAST HOUSTON COMMUNITY CHURCH

Sermon – The Inerrancy of The Bible, Pt 3

Belief and Unbelief

Scripture: Mark 9:17–29

03-11-2012

Mark 9:17–29 (NKJV) ¹⁷ Then one of the crowd answered and said, “Teacher, I brought Your son, who has a mute spirit. ¹⁸ 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.” ¹⁹ 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.” ²⁰ 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. ²¹ So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. ²² 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.” ²³ Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” ²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” ²⁵ When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!” ²⁶ Then *the spirit* cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, “He is dead.” ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. ²⁸ And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” ²⁹ So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”

As I have been asking you to let me know of any difficult passages you are in need of help about, two came up in our last Bible Study.

1. Why did God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden in the first place since God knows everything, He must have known that Adam and Eve would eat of it.
2. The second was, to have a better understanding of belief, believing. What is it to believe?

These are good question and central to the tenants of our faith. In the limited time we have together, I will have to address these one at a time. Today we will explore the meaning and value of believing.

believe \bə-ˈlēv\ *verb* (MW)**1a** : to have a firm religious **faith** **b** : to accept as true, genuine, or real
⟨ideals we *believe* in⟩ ⟨*believes* in ghosts⟩

2 : to have a firm conviction as to the goodness, efficacy, or ability of something ⟨*believe* in exercise⟩

Looking back at the original word from which it was translated that word is:

4100 πιστεύω [*pisteuo* /pist·yoo·o/] v. The word or a variation of it (believes, believe, believed) appears over 1,220 times in the Bible. On 248 occurrences; AV translates it as “believe” 239 times, “commit unto”. It is taken from the Greek word "Pistis" which means faith. To believe, have faith in, trust. NT meanings:

In our focus passage there lies two verses that may be construed as contradictory that use the word believe, belief. At first the verses seem to be opposing one another.

V ²³ Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” ²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

In this encounter with Jesus we have a father at the end not knowing what to do. No doubt he heard about Jesus and sought Him out desperately wanting Jesus to heal his son. His fear is on the verge of panic when the disciples of Jesus, failed to heal his son. (V18) when they had healed others.

Mark 3:14–15 (NKJV) ¹⁴ Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, ¹⁵ and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons:

Mark 6:12–13 (NKJV) ¹² So they went out and preached that people should repent. ¹³ And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.

One side note that could be another sermon is to take note that Jesus empowered all twelve, which included Judas.

V¹⁹ 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.”

This verse indicated a frustration of Jesus. The question I had was, "who is He frustrated with?" At first it sounds like His frustration was directed toward the disciples for not casting out the demon. There are some commentators that take this view.

There are others that believe, as I do, that He was referring to the crowd. I believe this because:
Mark 9:14–16 (NKJV) ¹⁴ And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. ¹⁵ Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. ¹⁶ And He asked the scribes, “What are you discussing with them?”

There was a dispute between the crowd and the scribes, no doubt it was about Jesus. But I believe this event addresses the unbelief of the crowd, the father and the disciples.

The dispute between the crowd and the scribes was probably centered around who Jesus was and His power, some believed and some did not believe.

The father came with a measure of belief even after the disciples failed, he believed that Jesus still could heal his son. His belief was not complete for look at v22
Mark 9:22 (NKJV) ²² ... But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”

"If" is a conditional word. In this case not a word of total confidence. Every translation says "if you can". not "if you will or it you please to, but if you are able to heal please do so.

After the fig tree died --

Mark 11:23–24 (NKJV) ²³ For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. ²⁴ Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

I see a lot of us in this father. Like him we have been very desperate for answered prayer for deliverance or blessings. We say we believe but there still remains a measure of unbelief in us. This is not said to criticize you for I am included in the statement. It is said for us to confess our short comings and ask Jesus to strengthen us where we are weak

V.” ²³ Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things *are* possible to him who believes.

I believe Jesus asked this question for the benefits of all around, the crowd, the father and the disciples. I find it interesting in the choice of Jesus words. The father said "if you can" and Jesus said to him, "If you can." The problem is not with the ability of Jesus but the level of our belief. Let it be known to all that Jesus proved many times that He doesn't need our faith to do anything but we need our faith.

²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

Desperation has a tendency to make us tell the truth. The father gets credit for truthfulness. He knew he believed, that is why he brought his son to Jesus, but he also knew he had a measure of unbelief within him, and asked Jesus to help him with that unbelief.

Let's begin by being honest with Jesus. If we are honest with Him about our belief, we will be honest with others and not to present ourselves as this great beacon of faith when we are not.

2 Thessalonians 1:3 (NKJV) ³ We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, ...

We all have a different level of faith and belief. The more we exercise our faith the stronger it gets. If all we have is true faith of a mustard seed, then if we bring that honestly to Jesus, He can do the rest. (*Matt 17:20, Luke 17:6*)

^{v25} When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!”

Jesus healed the son for the benefit of all three, the crowd that came running to see. Those in the crowd that were trying to believe against the doubt of the scribes have now had their faith strengthened. The father who believed but still had a measure of unbelief had his faith/belief confirmed and strengthened.

That leaves the disciples.

Let me try to bring this point home very clearly. Turn to *Matthew 17:19–22*. Here you can see a telling by Matthew the same story except that Matthew answers the questions about the disciple's belief.

When asked why they could not cast out the demon, Jesus said because of their unbelief.

Matthew 17:19–21 (NKJV) ¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” ²⁰ So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. ²¹ However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

Surely the disciples believed and they had reason to because they had on several occasions healed the sick and cast out demons. But even the disciples had a measure of unbelief.

There are some things in our lives that just a passing prayer will not change. Sometimes our normal prayer life will not bring about the change we are asking for. Sometimes there has to be persistence prayers. Remember Elijah from Bible Study, when he prayed three time and laid on the boy's dead body. He did not do that to stop the rain or cause it to begin again. This was done with just one prayer.

Sometimes our prayer needs to be with a fellow believer, sometimes with unwavering persistence, sometimes with a greater degree of patience and sometime accompanied by fasting,

Always with humility, within His will and faith.

James 1:6–8 (1901 ASV) ⁶ But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. ⁷ For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; ⁸ a double minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Mark 11:24 (NKJV) ²⁴ Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

Matthew 21:22 (NKJV) ²² And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”

All prayer is subject to the will of God.

We began this message this morning looking at the word "believe" and its meaning. In the context of the Bible, believe is a synonym of "faith".

It is not so important that we believe for we all have the capacity to believe. It is what we believe (hold to be true) that makes the difference.

*Genesis 15:6 (NLT) ⁶ And Abram **believed** the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his **faith**.*

Romans 10:4 (NKJV) ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

*Romans 10:9–11 (NKJV) ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and **believe in your heart** that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart **one believes unto righteousness**, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”*

If we want our faith to grow then we must exercise and believe what God has said. If we want to get closer to God then we must believe what God has said. If we want to be righteous and "holy" we must believe what God has said.

Without believing you cannot have faith and without faith you cannot please God.

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV) 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.

I believe in God and Christ but if there is any unbelief, I pray that He removes it.

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