

OVERCOMING THE DISCEPTION OF UNBELIEF

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INTRODUCTION

I am amazed what Christians say when they speak. Most of the time people speak doom and gloom when they are faced with a problem. It is very rare to hear someone confess the faithfulness of God and how he or she will overcome their present situation. Most people that I have observed are very quick to say how a really bad experience has shaped their lives, how the doctor's report will influence their future, or how a present financial situation will dictate their capabilities later. All of these negative confessions come from people who confess that they are Christian. These confessions of unbelief come from those that say God is their heavenly father who loves them, but their actions say that He doesn't care or at the very least they don't trust Him.

Unbelief has a profound effect on our lives. It causes us to take a particular course of action that is not consistent with their Christian confessions. For example, if the banker says that you cannot have a loan then you immediately assume that we will not get what we hoped the loan would provide. If the doctor says you have a certain disease, then we immediately picture how that disease will shape the future. Another area that I see unbelief abounding in is salvation. People say they are saved, but they don't act like it. They say that Jesus died for their sins and that his redemptive act was enough to save them. However, their actions say that Jesus' death and resurrection was not enough to save them because they persist in trying to earn salvation through works.

Most of the time people govern their lives by unbelief instead of faith in God. We pursue those things that are based on the present situation instead of what God has promised us in his word. We don't incorporate his word in our lives and live it, but instead live according to the doctor's report, the banker's assessment, or the voice of our present situation.

I have observed that many (if not most) professed Christians are free people walking around the open door prison cell so to speak. They have the power of God with them and in them and yet they walk around living as though God doesn't care and has done nothing for them. We allow our unbelief to overpower any faith that we have, which

results in us not relying on or trusting in God. God says it and we typically do not believe it. This shows in how we live, what we are dedicated to, and the things we say.

It is time that Christians live by faith and not by unbelief. It is time we put our life where our mouth is and believe the things we say that the bible teaches us. We say God loves us, but we act like he doesn't. Start acting like the God who created the universe loves you and cares for you. We need to start believing what the God has told us in his word and allow our lives to flourish in victory instead of us wallowing in defeat.

BELIEVE GOD

Ephesians 2:4-9 (NKJV) {4} But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, {5} even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), {6} and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, {7} that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. {8} For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, {9} not of works, lest anyone should boast.

This and other scriptures make the point that we are saved by the grace of God and that it is therefore a gift. We do not earn salvation by doing works, but rather freely receive it by putting our faith in Jesus Christ. Consider this next passage, which really drives the point home that we had nothing to do with the salvation that God has provided.

Romans 5:8 (NKJV) {8} But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

While we were sinners living our own godless life God demonstrated his love towards us. He demonstrated his love by sending Jesus Christ to die for our sins (while we were still sinners). God doesn't save us because we have done enough good works to earn it. God saves us because he loves us.

John 3:16 (NKJV) {16} 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.

Do you really believe what the word of God says here? If so then why do you persist in trying to earn what God has given you? Why do we believe that church attendance, tithing, and a plethora of religious activities will earn us God's love and his salvation? Why are we so quick to assume that misfortune is God's punishment for what we have done wrong? The truth is that we really don't believe the word of God. We say we do, but in our hearts we don't believe that salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. We believe that God wants us to perform in order to earn his salvation.

We also don't apply the word of God to other areas of our life. Consider the following scripture for example.

Mark 9:23 (NKJV) {23} Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."

Matthew 8:17 (NKJV) {17} that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses."

The bible says that if we believe all things are possible yet we deem the situation hopeless or limited by the report of others when we face various circumstances in our lives. If all things are possible then why don't we rather reach for the positive instead of assuming the negative? If the bible says that Jesus took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses then why do we feel helpless when the doctor gives us a health report? Why do we immediately thing negatively when we feel pain? I'll tell you why. We simply do not believe God, doubt God, or both. Jesus told us.

Mark 11:22-24 (NKJV) {22} So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. {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.

If you don't doubt in your heart the things you confess and believe that what you say will happen then it will happen according to Jesus. Jesus did not qualify it at all. If you say it, believe it, and don't doubt in your heart then it will happen. Of course since Jesus said that we have to have faith in God (Or God's kind of faith) then what we pray must be in the will of God.

When I was growing up I used to hear ministers say that God gives you what you need and not what you want? That sounds good on the surface, but who determines what a need is and what is a want? This is also very problematic when I considered scriptures such as the following.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV) {5} Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; {6} In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Psalms 37:3-4 (NKJV) {3} Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. {4} Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

John 15:7 (NKJV) {7} If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

Proverbs 18:21 (NKJV) {21} Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.

You have a lot to do with what happens in your life. However, many Christians are like driftwood floating in the sea going wherever the waves happen to send it. We don't have to settle for what the world or even the devil gives us thought that is exactly what I see Christians do. They believe the devil more than they believe the Lord. If what we say can affect our lives then we should consider what we say. If what we say is based on what is in the heart then we should do something about our heart (See Matthew 12:34). I find that many Christian's hearts are filled with doubt and unbelief instead of faith in their God. They live their lives not appropriating what God has provided for them.

I am not suggesting that I can believe to be rich and expect God to make me rich since the bible says do not seek to be rich (Proverbs 23:4). However, that doesn't mean that I can't ask God for the house that I want, the car that I want, or whatever. If it is a desire of my heart or something that I want then I'm going to go to God about it. After all, what does God care what kind of house you have or what kind of car you drive? What matters are our motives. If I want a house to show everyone how rich I am then the motivation is wrong and that in itself is against scripture (Proverbs 6:16-17, James 4:3).

My point is this. Live by the word of God (Matthew 4:4). If God has promised you something then receive it. He has promised us healing so receive it. He has promised us that we can ask for anything and receive it as long as it isn't against his will. So why not ask God for the ministry of healing, the ministry of miracles, ability to share his word effectively, etc.? Why not also ask God for the things that you want like a new home, better paying job, your own business, or whatever?

Believe God! If God said it then believe it. Stop believing the banker more than God. Stop believing the doctor more than God! Stop believing your body more than God's word. Stop believing everything else above the word of God. Let God be true and everything else a liar! Start believing God and prosper in all things.

3 John 1-2 (NKJV) {2} Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.

The word of God desires that we prosper in ALL THINGS. Believe it. Grab hold of that and take it and live it. Live is such a great journey when we live it by faith in God.

HOW DO I BELIEVE?

It is wonderful when the preacher says, "Have faith in God." However, what does that mean and how do you do that? I used to ask, "What does that look like?" Well let me

share some things with you from my own life as I applied the word of God to my various situations.

Develop and nurture a relationship with the Lord. Nothing has meaning unless we have a relationship with the Lord. That is what God wanted anyway. He sent Jesus Christ to reconcile us to God (2 Corinthians 5:12-21). Jesus said to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness and all of our needs would be met (Matthew 6:33). The first thing to do is develop a relationship with the Lord. You will then be able to operate in the authority of Jesus Christ having the Spirit of God within you (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19).

Know what God said. You can't trust God if you don't know what he said in the first place. Don't go by what you have heard in church or what others have told you that God said. Read your bible and know firsthand what God said. Study your bible so that you would gain understanding and keep the enemy from stealing the word of God that was sown in your heart (See Matthew 13 and Mark 4). If you know that God said all things are possible to those who believe then you know right away that all things are possible to you if you simply believe.

Obey and do it. Faith without works is dead (James 2:17). It is one thing to say that you believe and it is another thing to actually govern your life as if you really do believe. If Jesus says that he will never leave you or forsake you then why do we ask Jesus to come? He is already with you. If we really believe that God has met my need according to his riches in glory (Philippians 4:19) then why do we worry about bills not being paid or my situation not being resolved? Start acting like you believe the things you say. If God says all things are possible to those who believe then believe and trust that God will provide in everything.

Don't be afraid of making a mistake. I have made mistakes in the past. I've done things that I thought was directed by God and found that perhaps it was not or that I missed something while on the way. There is one incident in my life where my wife and I learned a very valuable lesson. Just do it (in wisdom). God had provided a new home for us, but we reasoned that we could not afford it and didn't even try to get it. Several years later we found ourselves in the same situation, but with a much more expensive home. However, this time we decided to try and that is when the floodgates of God's provision opened and we were able to get the home. We had learned from the previous experiences and declared that we wouldn't let that happen again. Just because things don't happen right away doesn't mean that it won't work or that God isn't directing you. It only means that you are on a path to the goal. So don't be afraid to make a mistake. Believe God and pursue it.

Don't listen to others that tell you otherwise. Most people live their lives in doubt and unbelief. When you try to do something crazy like trust God for something those people are quick to give you their negative counsel and talk you out of your pursuit. Don't listen to them. Counsel is good when it is constructive. However, don't allow

anyone to talk you out of trusting God. When I was engaged to get married my fiancée (now wife) were looking to buy a home. However, most of my relatives were telling us that people usually get an apartment and then buy a home later. I wanted a home now and I was praying and believing God for it. Instead I took the advice of family members as it applied to utilities, saving money, etc. I didn't allow anyone to take my dream away and talk me out of trusting God. They provided much practical information for me, but I neglected to be poisoned by their doubt and unbelief. We got the house that we wanted with a great blessing of furniture left by the previous owner on top of it all. I can surely say from experience that all things work together for good to those who love God and are the called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).

Another thing that was very important to me learning to trust God is...

Romans 10:17 (NKJV) {17} So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Put the word of God in you to obtain faith. Let the report from the word of God effect an increase of faith in your heart. The word of God will grow in you as long as you put it there with understanding.

CONCLUSION

Hosea 4:6 (NKJV) {6} My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

Many professed Christians live a defeated life because they don't know any better. They believe everyone and everything except God. Christians die before their time (See Ecclesiastes 10:17 - It is possible to die before your time).

God has provided abundant life to us, which includes the forgiveness of sins, everlasting life, health, and prosperity. However, many if not most Christians live as though their heavenly father is powerless or just don't care about them. He does care and he does love us. He has demonstrated this to us as well as told us in his word. It is for us to believe and appropriate our faith to effect change in our lives. We don't have to be the sick and destitute. We can be blessed and a conduit for blessings. All we have to do is believe. Amen

If you have any questions about this then feel free to send your questions to question@pursuingthetruth.org.