

Lord, I Believe!

Help Thou Mine Unbelief

“Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” Mark 9:23,24.

From the start, may we understand that the Great Physician was faced with two patients: a son who had an unclean spirit that greatly vexed him; and a father who was afflicted because of the concern for his son and moreover needed One to help him in the uncertainty of his unbelief. Still, there are others: “Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could we not cast him [the unclean spirit] out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief. . .” Matt. 17:19,20a. And yet there are others. “O faithless and perverse generation” Matt. 17:17.

“This is not spoken to the disciples, but to the people, and perhaps especially to the scribes, who are mentioned in Mark ix.14. . . Those that are faithless will be perverse [to distort, corrupt, turn away]; and perverseness is sin in its worse colours. Faith is compliance with God, unbelief is opposition and contradiction [perversion] to God. Matthew Henry’s commentary, vol. v, page 246. (brackets mine)

“And it came to pass, that on the next day [following the transfiguration] when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. And a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out, and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him” Luke 9:37-39. Although this account is graphic in its presentation, we would be hard pressed not to see the parallel in the scriptures: “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. . .and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” Eph. 2:2,3b. We see the comparison: the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; the children of wrath. . .is it not even as the spirit that vexed this young man? “and bruising him hardly departed from him.” We can surely relate to that! The spirit of doubt and unbelief is relentless in its attacks upon the believer and “hardly departs from us!”

The verses following Luke 9:39 confer a timely word of prophesy: “Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men” Luke 9:44. And what sort of men were they? They were those that walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air; those who were by nature the children of wrath. These “children of wrath” were those who would, in their pretentious righteousness, conspire to and crucify the Lord of glory upon a Roman cross.

“And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not” Luke 9:40. When one has seemingly exhausted all other options, and in his desperation and as a last resort he may then approach the true Source of Deliverance.

“And he asked his 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: if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us” Mark 9:21,23. *If thou canst do anything.* Exasperated at the failure of mere mortals to help, he is reluctant to believe that Christ Himself could bring about the deliverance of his son from the evil one.

How this young man prefigures the nation, the remnant of Israel! Were he permitted to do so, the evil spirit would have utterly destroyed him long ago! And so it is with Israel; even unto this day.

“But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I AM the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour” Isa. 43:1-3.

Our Lord is none other than the Ancient of days: “I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom” Daniel 7:21,22. “We shall rule and reign with Christ!”

Some words of courage - and caution. “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him: for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” I Peter 5:6-8. Be encouraged! The “roaring lion” is no match for the Lion of the tribe of Judah! “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming!” II Thes. 2:8.

Luke’s record tells us that the man “cried out, saying Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child” (chapter 9 vs. 38). And shall we not have an awareness of another compassionate Father who would give His only begotten Son for us? In Matthew He is called Lord, (chapter 17 vs.15), but in Mark 9:17 he, at the beginning, addressed Jesus as Master, saying “IF thou canst do *anything*,” but when his faith was challenged by the Saviour: (IF thou canst believe, *all things* are possible to him that believeth) he cried out, with tears, *Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.*”

“*Canst thou believe? Darest thou believe? Art thou willing to venture thy all in the hands of Christ? To venture all thy spiritual concerns with him, and all thy temporal concerns for him? Canst thou find in thy heart to do this? If so, it is not impossible but that, though thou hast been a great sinner, thou mayest be reconciled; though thou art very mean and unworthy, thou mayest get to heaven. If thou canst believe, it is possible that thy hard heart may be softened, thy spiritual diseases may be cured. . .*” Matthew Henry, vol. 5, page 510

“And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly cryeth out; and it *teareth* him that he foameth again, and *bruising him* hardly departed from him” Luke 9:39. So it is said of another Son: “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was *bruised* for our iniquities, oppressed, afflicted; he was cut off out of the land of the living: he hath made his grave with the wicked.” Isaiah 53.

“And he was as one dead. . .But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose” vs. 26b,27. Do we err in saying that “God hath raised him from the dead?” Likewise it is confirmed by many scriptures concerning God’s only begotten - God hath raised *Him* from the dead!” cf. Acts 3:15, 4:10, 13:30, Rom. 7:4, 10:9, I Cor. 15:15, Gal. 1:1, Col. 2:12, I Thes. 1:9, I Peter 1:21.

A further application: “Even when *we were dead* in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath *raised us up* together, and made us sit together in heavenly

places in Christ Jesus” Eph. 2:5,6.

“And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father” Luke 9:42. Was not God’s only Son raised from the dead in a glorified body? Is He not even now, “delivered again to His Father,” and sitting at His right hand?

Lord, I believe. But if you will notice, in neither of the gospels did Jesus commend the man for his faith (as in the case of the centurion who said, “Lord. . .speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed - to which Jesus said, “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” Matt. 8:8,10.) But this man confessed his infirmity; moreover asking for help in that he lacked faith.

Lord, I believe. Help thou mine unbelief. I openly confess my unbelief - but I believe. Help thou mine unbelief? How are we to understand his plea? Strengthen my unbelief? Give it a sure and a firm foundation on which to stand? Help my unbelief? I can do very well by myself in that department! I can not believe as well as anybody! A foolish ploy you say? And I agree!

What does he believe? What is his source of faith, if he indeed believes? Is he merely believing in the miracle that he hopes Jesus will perform? Or is his faith where it should be - where it *must* be - in Whom it must be?

Help thou mine unbelief. Help, *boetheo*, Gr. to aid or relieve. It is *not*, Lord, give me first aid: put on a Band-Aid; give some comfort to me in the midst of my infirmity - but help me; wash me thoroughly, cause thy Word to be emblazoned in my heart, that I might be made free of the vexation of my unbelief.

If this man is to believe that Jesus can make his son whole, his faith must first find lodging in Christ: He is to be always the object of our faith. If He is not, then our “faith” is no more than a fanciful imagination. Our tendency is to put our faith in OUR faith, and not in THE faith. “I. . .exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for THE faith which was once delivered unto the saints” Jude 3b.

But for the sincere heart, Matthew Henry has this commentary:

Help thou mine unbelief. Even those who through grace can say, *Lord, I believe*, have reason to complain of their unbelief; that they cannot so readily apply to themselves, and in their own case, the word of Christ as they should, nor so cheerfully depend upon it. Those that complain of unbelief must look up to Christ for grace to help them against it, and *His grace shall be sufficient for them.* *Help mine unbelief*, help me to a pardon for it, help me with power against it; help out what is wanting in my faith with thy grace, the strength of which is perfected in our weakness.” (volume 5, page 510)

Lord, I believe. What do you believe? That *You* are able to take the darkness of my unbelief and dispel it with the Light of Faith! Can there be any doubt that this man desired to be looked upon with compassion (he said he did). Is not his cry one for mercy; and that the hand of grace be extended to him, though he realized he in no wise merited it?

Lord, I Believe! Faith is as an artesian well, springing up; but Unbelief is a broken cistern that can hold no water.

“Faith is the substance. . . *sub stans: standing under*. Faith provides a firm standing-ground while I await the fulfilling of God’s promises. Faith furnishes my heart with a sure support. An Exposition of Hebrews - A. W. Pink, page 650

Faith IS! It is not a figment of one’s imagination! Faith IS substance, it is evidence; it is the foundation, the support of our Blessed Hope! Hope brings Joy. “Abide in my love. . . that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” John 15:10a,11. From the refreshing spring of Joy abides Christ’s Peace, accompanied by praise and worship. “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” I Peter 1:8. Unbelief on the other hand, is without substance, without evidence, and therefore without hope. Unbelief willingly walks in darkness, is blind to the Truth, is not persuaded by it, neither embraces it, nor confesses it. Unbelief looks in vain for “happiness;” but no joy is to be found; no peace - and certainly no praise or worship will be offered: at least not unto the “blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” I Tim. 6:15.

Faith receives the Truth, the abiding witness of the Spirit, Faith gazes into the realm of the eternal; faith is persuaded of the authenticity of the Report, Faith embraces the Truth, Faith confesses that one is a stranger and a pilgrim in this world and looks longingly and with expectation for its eternal Home. (Hebrews 11:13.)

When one enters a darkened building with a candle, a lantern (or merely turns on the electrical lighting): is the darkness *changed into* light; does it take upon itself the characteristics of illumination? No! The darkness vanishes away; it is dispelled by the light. The Darkness is powerless to withhold or bring into captivity the Light! Is not faith, Light? Is not unbelief, Darkness? Oh Light of faith! Dispel thou the darkness of my unbelief! Lord, I believe! Help Thou mine unbelief!

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