

# Lack of Faith?

(Or Unbelief)

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Before I begin this study, I want to make it clear that I personally do not elevate myself above anyone else including some of the people (who will remain nameless) that I will be recalling, or referring to in this writing. I am not calling out, or bringing to light anyone in particular although some of my readers will recognize themselves by some of the interactions I may have had with them at some point in my relationship with them. All people reading this, myself including, may be represented in some, if not all of what I will be exposing in this study. Let me begin with a simple question; “Do you consider yourself to be a person of *Honesty or Integrity*?” There are many definitions and synonyms for honesty, (integrity being one of them) so take the time to look at the various definitions if you are not sure of your answer. Some of the words that jump out at me when looking at the [Dictionary.com definitions](#), give an “up front” sampling of how most of us might define honesty, words such as, “Truthfulness and Sincerity.” I believe most people would gravitate to these definitions, at least when giving their “Short Answer.” Depending on the information sources available, it is possible a person can sincerely believe they are passing on truthful information, yet is it still possible they are passing information that is false! Another definition of honesty is “Freedom from Deceit or Fraud.” This prompts another question: “Can a person be both Truthful and Sincere, yet be Deceitful and / or Fraudulent at the same time?” Think about this for a few moments! As we continue with this study, I believe many will realize that these four words or concepts, (Truthfulness, Sincerity, Deceitfulness, and Fraudulence) are mysteriously intertwined, especially and surprisingly, even within the Christian Church! Some people are insincere and deceitful, and they don’t even realize it! It is not that they are intentionally being deceitful, but they have been tricked into being deceitful because they are not as sincere as they claim to be. Are you confused yet?

Years ago, I heard a sermon by a preacher trying to explain as to how many people, because they go to Church “regularly,” think they are... but aren’t necessarily Christians! He illustrated this by saying, “because you spend time in a garage, it doesn’t mean you are a car!” Even if you “sincerely believe you are a car” – you are not a car! In modern times this “may be debated” in light of the apparent current confusion (or should I say, foolishness...) concerning such things as obvious as gender. Some things are what they are whether you sincerely believe otherwise or not; as I have said many times in the past, “Truth is Truth.” To “sincerely believe” in another opinion, does not change the facts regardless of the subject. So far, we have addressed Truthfulness, which is dependent on facts, and Sincerity, which is more dependent on belief or adherence to the facts, but what about Deceitfulness and Fraud. Truthfulness and sincerity require distinct action on the part of those exhibiting such traits. For example, in order to be truthful, one must put aside that which is untrue. In other words, there can be no compromise, not even for the sake of protecting the feelings of those not yet enlightened or committed to truthfulness, factual knowledge, including even those unfamiliar with the information at hand. Compromise such as this, is the main contributing factor to what we call these days, “Political Correctness.” People modify, or avoid what they know to be true, in order not to “Offend” someone in disagreement with them. This is contrary to sincerity, and ‘round and ‘round it goes! Nevertheless, my goal is not to talk about political correctness, but rather the Christian Church, and those who claim to be Christians. Are we being honest with ourselves, are we honest with others, do we “practice what we preach?” Do we depend on facts or opinions? Moreover how are we perceived by others, especially those considering the Christian faith? Not only do people searching for God scrutinize Christian behavior, but even more so, secular society is constantly seeking to discredit or “debunk” anything concerning the Christian faith. Satan is quick to point out even the slightest inconsistency among those proclaiming faith in God. He does this in order to distract those we may be witnessing to, and to distort the truth of the Word of God. This being said, something we must consider *if we claim to be “Christian,”* is how do we who call ourselves Christian, act, or react in life compared to non-Christians, especially when our faith may be tested by sickness, emotional stress, or the common challenges of life in general. How do we handle the “trials of life” compared to non-Christians?

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It is sad to say that a growing number of “Christians” are not making much of an impression on those observing them who are evaluating the benefits or effects of their so-called faith! It is in many cases, impossible to discern any differences in the way so-called Christians handle life issues compared to those who call themselves Atheists! For example, I know a person who has claimed faith in Jesus for many decades. This person claims faith in the power of God for salvation, and issues pertaining to such things as healing, prosperity, and emotional peace; yet this person has complained of being “sick” all of their life! Even to this day... nothing ever seems to change! As a result, this person is becoming an emotional basket case! It is getting to a point that even people who care deeply for this person, and have even been praying for this person, are beginning to pull away to avoid becoming dragged down! What is going on here? Anyone who is familiar with the ministry of Jesus knows that the biggest draw to his ministry on earth was His ability to heal the sick, open blind eyes, make the lame walk, and even raise the dead! Many people do not know that He also empowered His disciples (including us) to do the same, although they often do not live up to His 100% success rate. Most people think that it would take an extraordinary amount of faith to perform the miracles that Jesus performed. In the book of Matthew chapter 17 it tells of a time when the disciples failed at casting out a demon from a boy. We are talking about the original 12 disciples in this case... the ones who were with Him when He preformed all of these miracles! Just prior to this episode, the disciples had seen Jesus walk on water and instantly calm a storm! Some of them had just come down from the mountain where they saw Jesus transfigured before their eyes observing Him talking with Moses and Elijah! I submit that these *guys* certainly should have had stronger faith by now than other followers of Jesus, even to this day!

They asked Jesus why they had failed to cast out the demon and Jesus gave them a surprising answer that was not only the key to their failure, but it is also the main reason why we do not see many miracles in churches among professing Christians today, and it had nothing to do with their faith! It had to do with “Unbelief.” I know that many people using modern translations of the Bible will point out Verse 20 of Matthew 17 proclaiming it says “because of their little faith,” and it indeed does! I cannot understand why so many modern translations render verse 20 using the term “little faith” rather than the traditional rendition of “unbelief,” especially in the context of the latter part of verse 20 that quotes Jesus as saying that faith the size of a mustard seed is enough to move a mountain! When you keep everything in context, this does not make any sense at all in light of the fact that a mustard seed is among the smallest seeds on the planet. Modern translators say the disciples could not cast out the demon because of their “little faith,” but Jesus is telling them that a little faith is more than enough, even to move a mountain! What is going on here? The Greek word in question is “Apistia,” which as I mentioned is usually translated “unbelief;” it comes from the root word, “Apeitheia” which according to Vines Dictionary means “the condition of being unpersuadable” (*a*, negative, *peithō*, “to persuade”), it denotes “obstinacy, obstinate rejection of the will of God;” hence, “disobedience;” [Eph. 2:2](#); [Eph. 5:6](#); [Col. 3:6](#), and in the RV of [Rom. 11:30](#), [32](#) and [Heb. 4:6](#), [11](#) (for AV, “unbelief”) William E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1940), WORDsearch CROSS e-book

In order to gain a better understanding, let us take a look at how this event is recorded in the Gospel of Mark, as Mark gives a few more details starting at verse 17 thru to verse 29.

## Mark 9:17-29 (NKJV)

<sup>17</sup> Then one of the crowd answered and said, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. <sup>18</sup> 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.” <sup>19</sup> 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.” <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. <sup>22</sup> And often he has

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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." <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things *are* possible to him who believes."

<sup>24</sup> Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" <sup>25</sup> 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!" <sup>26</sup> 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." <sup>27</sup> But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. <sup>28</sup> And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" <sup>29</sup> So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

Most people have been led to believe that the demon the disciples failed to cast out must have been extraordinarily powerful. The context of this passage does support that view to some degree; however, Jesus didn't seem to be intimidated by this demon at all. In fact, even as the demon was convulsing the young man at His feet, Jesus calmly conversed with the boy's father! Jesus had given the disciples the power to cast out demons... so what happened, what was different about this demon? The short answer is that there was nothing different or special about the demon; what "was" different, was the response the disciples had concerning this demon. This demon apparently was more intimidating to the disciples compared to others the disciples had previously dealt with. When it comes down to it, intimidation is one of Satan's most effective tools. Satan cannot force anyone to do anything! So - the question is, "Was Jesus talking about the demon, or people's unbelief when He said, this kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting?" Once again, keep everything in context when you consider this question. When I first heard this concept, I had a hard time with it, until I realized that when kept in context – it makes perfect sense! Unbelief was the real culprit here; no demon can stand up to the power of God. Having been conditioned to think that Satan and his demons have overwhelming power over us; many "Christians" believe they are totally at Satan's mercy (which does not exist), but it is simply not true! Satan himself can do nothing to any of us without our consent! True - Satan can litter the path in front of you with obstacles and temptations, but he cannot force his will on you. You may do his bidding, but it is totally your choice! The next time you go before God in prayer, consider **Mark 9:17-29** and ask yourself, "Do I really believe God hears and answers our prayers?" Also... consider what Jesus said concerning how much faith is required to have your prayers answered when you pray in accordance to God's Word. As far as I can tell, the reason the disciples failed was not a "lack of faith," because without faith they wouldn't have even tried to cast out the demon! They failed because of intimidation, which made them believe that Satan was more powerful than God Almighty. Jesus told them, "faith the size of a mustard seed" was enough to deal with anything Satan could throw at them... They simply didn't believe it! This is why we see people who are "Anti-Christ" getting in the face of Christians today shouting threats and profanities, threatening violence... it is all about intimidation, a tool of Satan.

Satan's days are numbered and he knows it! This is why he has "pulled out all the stops," and he is trying to bring as many people down with him as he can. **Jesus is coming soon**, and like us, Satan does not know the day or the hour. He does however know the signs that Jesus told His disciples to watch for and those signs are all around us! God is faithful, and everything is coming together just as He said it would before His return. If you have a problem believing this, you have not been reading your Bible! If you say you have faith in God's Word, all you have to do is watch the news... That should take care of any "Unbelief" you may be dealing with. May God Bless you with wisdom and discernment as His return draws near. As for what I brought out about Honesty, Integrity, Truthfulness, and Sincerity at the beginning of this study, aren't they related to what we say we believe? People who are searching for God are watching all of us who say we believe in God and His Word. If we say we have faith but exhibit doubt and unbelief, are we not being "dishonest" and in some cases deceitful, especially those of us who are active in a ministry. Do you have faith the size of a mustard seed? If so, nothing is impossible for you within the will of God and His Word.