



THE REALM OF UNBELIEF

If there's one thing that God cannot stand, it's unbelief. The Bible says that God actually hates unbelief. As I read the Gospels, I can't help but notice the one thing that aroused the holy anger and righteous rebuke of Jesus; it was unbelief. In fact, He strongly rebuked both the Pharisees and His own disciples equally for their unbelief. It's also noteworthy that He was prevented from performing miracles in His own hometown of Nazareth because of His neighbors' unbelief.

The Bible teaches that there are two kinds of unbelief. One type is the human inability to believe something outside of his physical realm. This is due to human nature – a weakness that we all share; it's not really evil. God doesn't become angry when we lack faith. He understands our weakness and inability to believe.

But the other kind of unbelief makes God angry. This type of unbelief is the opposite of faith. Instead of trusting God's Word, it questions and challenges His truthfulness and faithfulness, even in the face of overwhelming evidence of divine love and wisdom. In the same way that love is a decision, unbelief is a choice. Unbelief is really a willful decision to go against the evidence that God presents to you and call Him a liar. And God hates it because it always leads His people into rebellion against His Kingdom.

It was Satan's conscious choice to reject God's rule that caused him to originate sin in his heart. It was Adam's willful choice not to believe God's wisdom that caused him to be deceived by Satan's lies; thus, allowing sin to infect the human race. Unbelief caused God's chosen people – the Israelites – to decide to wander and die in the desert rather than believe God's promises. This they did in spite of the countless evidences that God keeps His promises. The sin that will keep the world from receiving salvation by grace is its refusal to believe and accept the gift of the Son of God.

Behind every evil habit or sense of powerlessness that constantly defeats us is the spirit of unbelief. When we allow the devil to invade our hearts with his spirit of unbelief, we allow him to dictate how we will live our lives – powerless and defeated. God hates this kind of unbelief, because it is not merely the absence of faith; it is much worse than that. It is a persistent spirit of stubborn rebellion against Him. Unbelief has caused so much damage and ruin in God's universe. That's why He hates it!

The greatest disappointment of Christ is seeing His own disciples living as "Christian unbelievers." For three and a half years, Jesus

taught His disciples about His sacrificial death and resurrection on the third day. He did this seventeen times during His time with them. You would think that they should have understood and believed Him.

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared several times to some of His disciples. He even left messages through other people. Still, they did not believe that He was risen (**Mark 16:12-13**). Even after they had seen Him raised the dead several times in His ministry, unbelief still clouded their minds, and it prevented them from celebrating the greatest miracle of God.

Instead of waiting at the tomb to welcome back Jesus on Sunday morning, they were mourning in defeat and despair. The spirit of unbelief took hold of them and they allowed Satan's lies to overshadow Christ's prophetic Word. It was not enough that they had already seen an empty tomb and heard the testimony of Mary and the angels. Even the appearance of Jesus in their midst was not enough. They still would not believe. They chose to dwell in the realm of unbelief rather than live out the reality of God's eternity.

As I think about the unbelief of the Disciples, I can see that their experience was not unique to them. Many of us who have been born again and have answered Christ's call to discipleship are actually practicing "Christian unbelievers." After learning all about the powerful ministry of Jesus and His promise of greater miracles for His followers, we still choose not to believe. Many of us still tend to attribute anything supernatural to the devil. If we can't explain what happened, we say to one another that the devil did it. We are much too quick to believe in a supernatural devil but have difficulty believing in a supernatural Christ.

Unbelief must be removed from our hearts so that we can become people of faith, and not "Christian unbelievers." We need to hate unbelief the way God hates it and contend against the spirit that makes us powerless followers of Christ. Until Jesus dealt with the unbelief in His disciples, they could not receive the faith that would empower them to advance His Kingdom in power. He strongly rebuked them for their unbelief and brought them to repentance.

Right now, if you are struggling with unbelief, you can say to Jesus, *"Lord, I repent of my unbelief. I want to hate unbelief the way you hate it. I ask You to deliver me from the spirit of unbelief. Cast unbelief out of my thoughts and fill me with Your true faith, so I can be empowered to do everything that You have promised your people. Amen!"*