Faith And Doubt

Mark 9:23-24 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.

Introduction
If you can believe, anything is possible!

• What an incredible statement.
  o Looking into the face of a desperate man
  o whose son is hopelessly demon possessed.
• Jesus proclaims a message of hope that anyone can cling to.
  o If you can believe,
    ▪ you can have your miracle.
  o If you can believe,
    ▪ you can have your deliverance.
  o If you can believe
    ▪ the mountain in your life can be removed.
  o If you can believe
    ▪ the rivers that separate you from your promised land can be parted.
  o If you can believe
    ▪ the glory of the Lord can shine round about you in the middle of your darkest night.
  o If you can believe,
    ▪ all things are possible to him that believes!
• But it is the response of the father that has always intrigued me.
  o With tears, with conviction,
  o in all sincerity
  o the man cries out to Jesus:
    ▪ Lord, I believe...
    ▪ But help me with my unbelief!

The Contradiction
What an incredible contradiction!

• Doubt and Faith.
  o The two seem mutually exclusive.
    ▪ Where there is doubt, there is no faith.
    ▪ And where there is faith, there can be no doubt.
• But here we find them coexisting
  o in the same man,
  o at the same moment.
    ▪ Faith... And Doubt.
• Faith is prepared to receive the miracle.
  o Faith is prepared to embrace the promise.
Faith And Doubt

• Faith is prepared to rise up in hope
  ▪ and say, I CAN believe!

• Faith is prepared to see his son set free
  ▪ from the demons that torment him.

• But doubt is there also.
  ○ Doubt rears its ugly head
    ▪ and throws the wrench into the works.
  ○ Doubt tries to halt the miraculous
    ▪ before it ever happens.
  ○ Doubt tries to distract from the divine.

• Faith rises in the heart,
  ○ but doubt immediately throws a stumbling block in its path.

• Faith reaches for the promise
  ○ but doubt becomes a hindrance,
    ▪ the obstacle that blocks the light of hope.

• What an incredible dichotomy.
  ○ Here we see them side-by-side,
    ▪ Operating in the same instant,
      ▪ within the same man.

• A miracle is within his grasp,
  ○ the thing he has longed for,
    ▪ the thing he has sought after,
    ▪ it is finally within his grasp.

• And as faith lunges forth to catch hold of the promise,
  ○ doubt also rises with the same intensity
    ▪ to try to impede the miraculous from ever taking place.

• It is an uncomfortable truth.
  ○ Each of us has been given the measure of faith.
    ▪ Yet each of us possesses the capacity to doubt.

• And, while we think of them as opposites,
  ○ the reality is that they are often both present
    ▪ at the same time within us.

• Faith is an incredibly powerful force in the life of a believer.
  ○ It only takes the faith of a small mustard seed
    ▪ to see great and miraculous things occur in our lives.

• Yet doubt is the “achilles heel” of our faith.
  ○ Doubt is that ever present agent of hell
    ▪ that attempts to keep us from seeing
      ▪ the powerful results of our faith.

Doubt
Doubt has but one purpose for existing.
• Doubt exists only to undermine our faith.
  ○ Nothing good ever came from doubt.
• There has never been a useful product produced by doubt.
The Pentecostals of Lake City

Faith and Doubt

- Doubt never built anything.
- Doubt never achieved anything.
- Doubt can't accomplish any good.
  - It doesn't fuel desire.
  - It doesn't inspire confidence.
  - It has no practical purpose.
- It only tears down and destroys,
  - it never built up anything.

- Doubt renders hopes and dreams sterile.
  - It is the negative voice
    - that casts its dark shadow over hope.
- It was doubt that caused Eve to first eat of the forbidden fruit.
  - The Serpent attacked her with doubt.
    - Doubt will rob you of the joy of walking with God.
    - It will still away from you the multiplied blessings of God in your life.
- It was doubt that caused Cain to bring his insufficient offering to the Lord,
  - which eventually led him to murder his brother, Able.
    - Doubt is killer.
    - It is a destroyer.
- It was doubt that kept Israel from the Promised Land
  - and sent them back into the wilderness.
    - Doubt saw their enemies as giants
    - and their brethren as grasshoppers.
  - Doubt will keep you from ever realizing the promise and provision of God in your life!
- It was doubt that caused the rich young ruler
  - to leave the presence of Jesus with sadness and rejection
  - instead of victory and rejoicing.
    - Doubt will rob you of eternal life!
- Doubt is the fog of confusion
  - that causes us to question our direction.
- It lurks in the multitude of unknowns,
  - inviting us to question what we do not understand.
- Understand this:
  - Nowhere is doubt ever of any benefit to a child of God!
    - It is faith, not doubt,
      - which enables us to achieve great heights in God.
    - It is faith, not doubt,
      - that propels us into our divine destiny in God.
    - It is faith, not doubt,
      - which lays hold of the promises of God.
    - And it is faith, not doubt,
      - which is blessed over and over again by God.
- When he was disgusted with his disciples,
Jesus would say, “Oh ye of little faith!”

- But when he was moved to the miraculous
  - he would say, “Thy faith hath made thee whole.”
- It is faith, not doubt, that reaps the miraculous from God!

Abraham

In Romans 4, Paul speaks of the faith of Abraham, starting in verse 18:

**Romans 4:18-21**

18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.
19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb:
20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;
21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

- Who against hope, believed in hope!
  - When he weighed everything that was against hope.
    - He put his faith in hope!
  - When he surveyed the considerable doubt
    - that was positioned against hope.
  - When he recognized all of the reasons why he should doubt.
  - When he saw all of the evidence that declared that the situation was hopeless.
    - He still chose Hope!
    - He elevated faith over doubt.
- It didn’t make sense.
  - It wasn’t the logical thing to do.
    - But he lifted up his belief over his unbelief!
- Doubt reared its ugly little head.
  - It said, “Consider your body.”
    - “You are too old to become a father.”
    - “The seed of life is long since gone from you.”
  - But, instead of considering the evidence presented by doubt,
    - Abraham chose to consider the faithfulness of God.
- Doubt rose up and said, “Sarah’s womb is dead.”
  - “There’s no way for a child to be born of Sarah.”
  - “It is impossible, that time has passed.”
- But, instead of listening to doubt,
  - Abraham chose to remember the promises that God had already kept!
- Abraham had learned a lot over the last 35 years of walking with God.
  - He has learned that with God, nothing is impossible!
- Doubt was indeed there.
  - It tried to rob him of his promise.
• It tried to hinder the blessing of God.

• But the Bible says that “Abraham considered it not!”
  o He said, “I’m not going to make room in my life for doubt!”
    ▪ “The obstacles are many,
    ▪ but I’m not going to dwell on the obstacles.”
  o God has been faithful to me.
    ▪ I’m going to put my trust in Him!

• Paul said,
  o “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief;
  o but was strong in faith,
  o giving glory to God;
  o And being fully persuaded
  o that, what he had promised,
  o he was able also to perform.”

Doubt Will Come
I want you to understand tonight that doubt will come into your life.

• At the same time that faith rises up to meet the challenge
  o or to lay hold of the promises of God in your life.

• Doubt will rear it’s ugly head
  o and try to rob away from you
    ▪ what God is getting ready to do in your life!

• Doubt is like a spiritual parasite.
  o It sucks the life out of hope.
    ▪ It drains your faith dry.

• You need to learn, tonight, to recognize doubt.
  o It’s focus is never on future blessings.
    ▪ It is obsessed with past failures.
  o It is fixated on all of the reasons
    ▪ why you can’t see the promises of God
    ▪ come to pass in your life.

• It will present you with all of the supporting evidence
  o that says that the thing that you desire from God
  o is absolutely impossible.

• Faith, however, is focused on the faithfulness of God.
  o Faith is all about the source of your hope.
    ▪ It ignores all of the evidence
    ▪ and focuses itself on the God that CAN!

• Doubt delights in evidence.
  o Faith, however, finds its strength in testimony.

• Doubt will produce cold, calculated, clinical confirmation, reasons why it cannot be.
  o Reasons why God cannot bless.
  o Reasons why you cannot receive a miracle from God.

• But, while doubt is amassing its evidence, faith gathers its witnesses.
Faith and Doubt

- Faith testifies that God can do anything.
- Faith focuses on what God has already done:
  - and declares that what he has done before,
  - he will do again!
- Faith gathers a cloud of witnesses:
  - and begins to extoll the powerful provision of God.
- It's like David standing in front of Goliath:
  - The giant laughs at him.
    - The circumstances aren't in his favor.
  - The evidence is in,
    - the odds are overwhelmingly against him.
  - But David doesn't weight his evidence.
    - Instead he calls upon the witnesses.
      - He begins to testify...
        - I remember a lion...
        - I remember a bear...
  - And faith rises up and says,
    - “The SAME God who did it before will do it again!”

Lift Up Your Eyes

Some of you need to lift your eyes from all of the obstacles in your life and realize:
- That God has called you to do greater things:
  - That God has a plan and a purpose for your life
    - that is bigger than where you are right now.
- Some of you need to lift your eyes from the evidence:
  - that says that you aren't qualified to do a work for God
    - And recognize that God doesn’t call the qualified.
    - He qualifies the called.
      - And God has called you!
      - He has a promise for your life!
      - He has a divine purpose for you!
- Somebody in this place needs to lift up your eyes:
  - and catch a glimpse of the God who can!
    - Doubt will say that you tried before and you failed.
    - But faith will say that God has used men and women with much greater failures than yours!
      - And, if God can use them, then God can use you!
- The key difference between doubt and faith:
  - is that doubt is grounded in what it can see,
    - while faith is rooted in the unseen.
- You need to lift your eyes off of what you can see and understand.
  - You need to ignore the evidence for a moment.
- Faith wants to stir you to believe in that which is as of yet unseen.
  - Faith wants to move you to grasp that which defies the evidence!
- Faith says, I refuse to put my confidence in what I can see and understand.
Instead I choose to believe in an unseen hand that guides and directs my life!

- I understand tonight that you have both faith and doubt in your life.
  - I understand this evening that your faith wants to grasp the promise of God.
  - That your faith wants to claim the miraculous provision of God for your life.
    - But, at the same time, doubt asserts itself in your heart.
- Doubt tries to reason that what God has done for others,
  - he surely won’t do for you.
- Doubt tries to convince you that you aren’t good enough,
  - that you don’t have enough faith,
  - that you are somehow disqualified from receiving the promises of God.
- Tonight, you need to loose your faith
  - to let it rise and overcome your doubt!
    - God Can!
    - The testimony of faith is that GOD CAN!
- David said, I was young and now I’m old,
  - but I have NEVER seen the righteous forsaken or his seed begging bread.
- God Can!
  - He can do whatever you need him to do!!!!

Close
In ninth chapter of Mark, a tremendous thing happened.
- A man, just like me and just like you,
  - A man that harbored both faith and doubt in his heart.
  - Chose, just like Abraham,
    - to put his faith in God!
- Against hope, he believed in hope!
  - When everything was against him.
- When Jesus said, “If you can believe, anything is possible…”
  - He chose to believe.
    - He chose to let his faith overwhelm his doubt.
    - He chose to let his belief overcome his unbelief.
    - And he received his miracle.
- Somebody this evening needs to do just like he did.
  - I know there are reasons why you harbor doubt in your heart.
    - But what you need to do tonight
      - is you need to weigh all of those things that are against hope in your life
      - and you need to choose hope, in spite of the evidence!
- You need to listen to the testimony of scripture.
You need to remember that with God all things are possible.

You need to remind yourself
  - of the many mighty things that God has already done.

And you need to tell yourself that,
  - If he did it before,
  - he will do it again!

- God Can!
  - God Will!

- He isn't finished with you yet.
  - He isn't finished with us yet.

- Somebody needs to make up your mind.
  - Today I choose to believe.
    - Not because I can't see any obstacles.
    - Not because there isn't any evidence to the contrary.
    - But because my faith is greater than my doubt!

- I choose to put my faith in God
  - because he has proven himself to be faithful!

- Let your belief overcome your unbelief!
  - God wants to work in your life!