



The Confession of Faith

*“Jesus said unto him, If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes”
(Mark 9:23, NKJV).*

I hate to admit it, but sometimes I find it hard to believe God. It’s when the problem I face seems to get bigger and bigger and it keeps hanging on that my “believing” seems to get smaller. I know. I’ve said I write to encourage, inspire, instruct and help. Sometimes, however, I have to say with the man Jesus spoke to in our Scripture for today, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”

This father who brought his son to Jesus that day cried out with tears. He was desperate to see his son delivered. He had asked Jesus’ disciples to deliver his son from the spirit that periodically tried to destroy him in the fire or by drowning him. They had failed. When Jesus arrived, the father’s faith was not in good shape. He said to Jesus, “. . . if you can do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us” (Mark 9:22).

Jesus did not accept that “faith confession.” Jesus knew the man first needed help with his faith. He responded, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” Jesus accepted the man’s next confession, shaky as it was. The man’s confession of belief and his petition for help with his unbelief was enough for Jesus to perform this miracle. That’s the word of hope and encouragement in all of this. Our belief does not have to be perfect before Jesus will or can help us. We need to be honest about our unbelief and request help for it.

Jesus had sufficient faith to accomplish what this father and his son needed. I believe Jesus preferred, however, that His disciples had been able to cast out the spirit. Earlier in the

scenario the father told Jesus, “. . . I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit and they could not” (verse 18). Jesus responded, “. . . O unbelieving [faithless] generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?” (verse 19). Not only was Jesus amazed by their unbelief, but He knew the importance of His disciples becoming equipped to do the work of the ministry. When His disciples later asked Him privately why they could not cast out the spirit, He answered: “. . . This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer” (verse 29, *NIV*). Jesus spent a lot of time praying to His father. It does not appear the disciples did so at that time. This is one explanation for their powerlessness and unbelief.

You may ask how this story applies to you. We can see from it how unbelief is a great hindrance to receiving what we need from God. Jesus can work with just a little faith, but outright unbelief severely limits God’s work in our behalf. In Matthew 13:53 and verses following we read about Jesus’ reception by the people in his home town. The section concludes: “And he did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief” (verse 58).

This story also illustrates how a major problem in our lives can reveal the status of our belief in God’s ability to help us. Trouble is a test and a revealer of our faith. It’s easy to claim belief in God’s help and power when all is going fairly well. It often is more difficult to solidly believe God for help when we need a miracle. When we find that to be the case, the situation calls for serious prayer regarding our faith, asking God to “help our unbelief”—in other words, to deliver us from it.

This kind of situation also calls for holding fast our profession of faith. The writer of Hebrews tells us, “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession” (Hebrews 4:14, KJV). Jesus is our high priest who brings the professions or confessions of our mouth into the throne room of God. In Hebrews 3:1 we are told to “consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.” Jesus receives our words of profession just as the high priests in the Old Testament received the offerings or sacrifices of the people to present them to God.

Just as the priests in the Old Testament were not to present to God defective or inferior sacrifices, Jesus cannot present defective professions on our behalf to our Father God. When we begin to pray, we and our prayers may be filled with doubt and desperation. “Oh, God, if you can do anything, help me!” Jesus knows and cares about how we feel. He knows what we are going through, and He can be touched with our feelings in the struggle. In Hebrews 4:15 we read, “For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” However, He wants to lead us to make a confession of faith that can be presented by Him and received by the Father—even if it is a small one—even if it is only “I believe. Help my unbelief!” You see faith is the necessary element in all effective transactions with God.

Later in the Book of Hebrews, the writer discusses this again: “And since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:21-23, RSV). Here in the RSV it is called “the confession of our hope” while the KJV again says “profession of our faith.” Hope and faith are closely related and sometimes might be translated interchangeably. When I am feeling very shaky in the midst of a trial or some trouble, I need to hold fast my profession of faith. James, the brother of Jesus wrote, “. . . ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth [doubts, is double

mind] is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord” (James 1:6, KJV). I may not know how God will help me or in what form the answer will come, but I know God is faithful. I know He hears me when I pray. I know He cares and understands all I am going through. I know He is able, and I know He will help me. When I begin to make faith professions, I begin to get stronger. Sometimes I simply say, “I hold fast the profession of my faith!” God then strengthens my faith, and my enemies of doubt, fear and unbelief have to flee.

In the case of sickness, disease, addiction and other problems of the body and soul, I know for a fact God often uses doctors, nurses, hospitals, teachers, counselors and others to help us. These are options and we should seek God about His help in any way He wants to provide it. We need guidance about how God may want to supply our needs. God performs gradual miracles. Sometimes He does instantaneous ones. Often He wants to change our thinking. This requires work, time and our participation. In the midst of seeking God for His direction, we must cling to and speak our “confession of faith.” No matter what we face—through it all—our confession of faith will bring strength and stability and enable God to work in our behalf.

May you have all God’s richest blessings and may God help you hold fast your confession of faith! **SH**

GOD’S WORD FOR TODAY

Teaching Letter 16

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