

## Can You Believe God?

Sunday, January 20<sup>TH</sup>, 1991

### Mark 9:23

*“Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.”*

I'm going to speak to you for a little while on this subject: “Can You Believe God?” I have three texts. The first text is taken from Romans 4, and it talks about Abraham. Abraham was the father of the faithful, and the pattern of faith. Abraham was the one to whom God showed such grace and mercy. He was called the, *“Friend of God.”*

It says here, in Romans 4: verse 23, *“Abraham believed God.”* That is what made the difference, he believed God. *“And it was counted to him for righteousness.”* The fact was that he believed God. It was imputed to him or reckoned to him or counted unto him for holiness, for righteousness and acceptance.

Paul, the writer of this scripture, goes on and says something else to you and to me. He says, *“Abraham believed God. He believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.”* This was not written for Abraham's sake alone, that righteousness was imputed to him through faith, but for us also. This same righteousness and holiness and acceptance shall be imputed if we believe God. Isn't that something?

Abraham was a man just like you listening to me right now. He was a man just like you; he was a man of like passions, a family man, a workingman, a laboring man and a farmer. *“Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.”* That wasn't just written for Abraham. He wasn't a special character in this sense of the word. This was written for us also to whom this same righteousness, holiness and acceptance by the same God shall be given, if we believe God. Can you believe God?

In Mark 16:15, our Lord gathered His disciples about him after He had been crucified and raised from the grave. This was before He had ascended back to the Father. Judas was dead and Paul would join them later. He said to them, to these 11 apostles, *“You go into all the world and you preach the gospel,”* my gospel. You preach the gospel of my grace and the gospel of my glory. You go and preach my gospel to everybody, to every creature. *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be damned.”*

Now, can you believe the gospel? These are the words of Christ Himself. He said, “You go preach this gospel, where ever you go and to whomever you preach.” As they listen to you, that person who believes this gospel shall be gloriously, eternally, unchangeably saved. The person who does not believe this gospel shall be damned.

In Mark 9:23, there was a man who came to our Lord. This man had a son that had some sort of disease. I believe it was epilepsy or he was demon-possessed. There was definitely some problem. He said to the Lord, "I brought my son to your disciples and they couldn't do anything for him. Now, if you can do anything for him, will you help us?" Our Lord looked at that man and this is what He said, "*If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.*" That is what I am asking you today, can you believe God? Can you believe His Word?

Now, if there is any one thing that is established in these three texts, I could have read 3,000 texts on this subject. If there is any one thing established in the Word of God, it is the importance of believing God. Listen to Hebrews 11:6, "*Without faith it is impossible to please God. He that cometh to God must believe that God is and that God is the rewarder, (or the redeemer), of all those who diligently seek Him.*" If any man comes to God, he must believe God. There is no alternative. "*Without faith it is impossible to please God.*"

Four times the scripture says this in Habakkuk, Galatians, Hebrews and Romans, "*The just shall live by faith.*" That is how they live. They live by faith. All the promises of God are to those who believe. There are no promises to people who don't believe. There is no love, there is no grace, there is no blood and there is no redemption for a person who does not believe. "*All the promises of God are in Christ and they are yes.*" The promises of God are not yes and no, they are yes! The promises are to those who believe.

In Hebrews Chapter 11, it talks about Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Sarah and Rahab. This chapter talks about all these people of the Old Testament who walked with God. Do you know the one thing that all these people had in common? The one thing, according to Hebrews Chapter 11, is faith. "*By faith, Noah being warned of God prepared an ark. By faith, Enoch walked with God.*" By faith, Abraham was called out of his father's house to go to a land that God would show him. By faith, Jacob, by faith, Isaac, "*All things are possible to them that believe.*" Can you believe? Believe God!

Let me ask you this question and then try to answer it from the scriptures. What is it to believe God? You hear everybody talk about faith, faith and faith. What is faith and what is it to believe God? Well, it is not to just believe that there is a God. James says, "*You believe that there is one God, you do well; the devils also believe and trembles.*" So, it is not just to believe that there is a God, but it is to believe Him. It is not enough just to acknowledge that there is a God.

When our Lord Jesus Christ encountered the man with evil spirits, those evil spirits said, *“We know who you are, you are the Holy One of God. Have you come to torment us before our time?”* They acknowledged that Jesus Christ was God. They acknowledged that they had a time when He would deal with them in judgment. They said, *“Have you come to torment us before the time?”* So, to believe God is not to just acknowledge His presence, His power, and His judgment, it is to trust Him and to lean on Him. You have to believe on Him, trust him and lean on Him.

It is not just to profess a faith with the mouth; it is to act out that faith in coming to Him. What is it to believe God? The answer is to believe Him and to trust Him. I have to cast myself upon Him, to lean on Him and to come to Him and keep coming to Him.

Paul sums up faith through the years of trying to preach. I have looked for definitions of faith. I've looked little places, here and there for words, and scriptures that would help me to teach faith. In Second Timothy 1:12, Paul said, *“Nevertheless, I am not ashamed; I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.”*

Now, here is the definition of faith. Here is a man of faith; here is an apostle. This is the man that God used so mightily and greatly. He was a man of great revelation. He wrote 14 of the 27 books of the New Testament. Here he gave his summary of faith. This is the way that he gives it. He says, *“I know whom I have believed.”* You will notice that he did not say, “I know when I believed, I know what I believed, he said, *“I know whom I have believed.”* Salvation is a person. I know whom and I know who He is.

I know that He is a sovereign God. I know that He is the Almighty God. I know that He is the just God. I know that He is the merciful God and I know that He is God in Christ. I know that He is Jehovah, *“The Lord my Saviour.”* I know He is the redeemer. *“I know whom I have believed.”* I know something about Him, not everything by any measure. *“O that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection. O that I may win Christ.”* I know Him and I am persuaded, I'm confident that He is able.

That is what they said about Abraham. He believed God and he believed that God was able to do all that He promised. That is exactly what Paul is saying here. I believe God, I know Him and I know and am confident and persuaded that what He says He can do and He will do. *“He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him. He is able to keep us from falling. He is able to raise our vile bodies and make them like His own.”* He is able to accomplish His divine and Holy will. I know it and I am confident!

Notice this last word, *“I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded (and confident) that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”* That is faith! This is not only knowledge. I know God, I know who He is, I know what he did, I know why He did it and I know where Christ is right now. He is at the right-hand of God. I am persuaded that He is able to fulfill and do all that He promised and He is able to keep that which I have committed. Oh, yes!

None of these things are secondary in knowledge or confidence. I will tell you this, faith, if it is faith, acts and commits. Faith, if it is faith, surrenders. God said, *“Abraham, get thee out of thy father’s house to a land that I will show thee.”* Abraham believed God. You might ask me, “How do you know he believed God?” The answer is that Abraham went out. That is how I know that he believed God. Faith acts. You can’t separate faith and obedience or faith and conduct. *“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”* If you receive Christ, walk in Him.

Rahab was told to hang a scarlet line out the window and she would be spared. She believed God. How do I know? She hung the scarlet line out the window. The Lord said, *“Moses, put the blood on the door, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you.”* How do I know that Moses and those people believed God? They put the blood on the door.

In the Book of Romans, it talks about the justification of the soul. By faith we’re justified. *“We are not justified by works of righteousness which we have done but according to His mercy we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law.”* That is what Paul teaches in Romans. We are justified, forgiven, pardoned and redeemed by His death. We are justified by His life, by His work, and by His doing and dying. We are not justified by anything we do.

James comes along and James teaches that the justification of faith is works. You see; the justification of the soul is by Christ through faith. How do you know that a man’s faith is genuine? The answer is, by his works. *“Faith without works is dead.”* So, Paul said, *“I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to do all that He said, and is able to keep.”* I have proved my confidence in Him and proved my faith in Him, and I have proved I know Him by committing everything to Him.

You see; obedience is what separates false faith from true faith. Christ said, *“If you love me, you will keep My commandments.”* Christ is not saying, keeping My commandments makes you love Me, but rather, loving Me makes you keep My commandments. Christ said, *“You’re My friends if you do whatsoever I command you.”* I’m not the friend of

God because I do what He says; I do what He says, because I am the friend of God. Do you understand what I am saying?

Faith produces works. Real faith will produce a labor of love and works of faith. If a person claims to believe God and doesn't live like it, walk like it, talk like it and act like it, then he really doesn't believe God. God said, *"Abraham, take your son upon the mountain and sacrifice him to me."* Abraham believed God! How do I know? Abraham took Isaac upon the mountain. He did what God commanded him to do. To believe Christ is to receive Him. You have to receive Him as your Lord, your Master, the Lord of your life and bow to His will. *"No man can serve two Masters."*

There are people, out in this world who claim to believe on Jesus, yet they give no evidence. They are selfish, greedy, unthoughtful, unholy, and indifferent. They are not identified with God's people. They don't believe God. If you believe God, you walk with God. To believe Christ is to receive Him. To believe Christ is to come to Him in your body and soul.

What did Ruth say to Naomi? She said, *"I love you and where you go I go, and your people are my people. Where you lodge, I will lodge. Where you die, I will die. Where you are buried I will be buried."* Now, she loved that woman. If a person loves Christ, he will say the same thing. He will say, "Where you go, I will go. Your will is my will. Your command is my command. Your people are my people. Where you lodge I will lodge. When I die, I die in confidence and faith in you."

To believe Christ is to trust Him for my needs, spiritually, materially and physically. Trust Him! He said, *"Take no anxious thought for what you are going to eat, or drink or wear. Your Father knows you have need of these things. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."* If you believe God then you will walk in His Word. To believe Christ is to continually believe Him. You have to continue to trust Him, believe Him and continue to rest in Him.

Do you know what John says about people that run hot for a little while and then get cold? They serve God for a little while and then quit. They come to church for a little while and then they lay out. They will believe the Bible a little while and then they quit believing it. They walk with this crowd a while and then walk with the next one. Do you know what John says about those folks? He said, *"They went out from us because they never were of us."* They claimed to be for a little while, and professed to be for a little while. He said, *"They never were of us."*

How do you know that they were not of us John? *“If they were of us they would have no doubt, continued with us. We are the house of Christ if we hold fast the profession of our faith firm unto the end.”*

If anyone asks me, “What is it to believe God or what is saving faith?” I would say, it is to know Him, it is to have confidence, and be persuaded that He is able to do all that He said. It is a genuine, continual commitment in the heart, body and soul to all that I possess and to all that I am to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not a sign that I put out in the front of my house; this is an experience in the heart. He is Lord!

All right, here is the second question and the second point in this message. This is a very important part of this message. Can you believe God? You see; this saving faith has a chief object. This is not just a general faith. I know, that in a sense, we do believe the Word of God. From Genesis to Revelation, we know that God can’t lie. We believe the Word of God. The Word of God is an object of faith. God said, *“My Word will not return unto Me void.”* I do believe the Bible.

Secondly, it is to believe the promises of God from Genesis to Revelation, from that first promise, the seed of woman to the very last promise; we believe God and we believe His promises.

We believe in His mercy. *“God is plenteous in mercy.”* Really and truly, listen carefully to me, what is the chief object of this saving faith? This saving faith is brought together in one point. There is someone who I believe. I believe God and I believe His Word, His promises, His mercy, and His grace. All of this is in Christ. You see; Christ is the Word of God. The only way that I know the Word of God is in Christ.

*“No man has seen God at anytime, save the Son, He to whom the Son will reveal Him.”* He is even called, *“The Word of God.”* So, I believe Christ and therefore I believe the Word of God. He is the Word of God, the very revelation of God. Then, I believe God and Christ is God.

I believe the promises. *“All of the promises of God are in Christ.”* There is nothing for the sinner outside of Christ. Every promise of God Almighty is centered in the Lord Jesus Christ. When I believe Christ, I believe the promises of God and the mercy of God.

Paul keeps saying, *“Grace, mercy and peace be unto you, from God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* That is the reason, now listen to this, I’m coming to my point. This is the reason that when the jailor at Philippi asked Paul, *“Sir, what must I do to be saved?”* Paul replied in one sentence, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt*

*be saved.*” Because Jesus Christ is God, God was in Christ. Jesus Christ is the Word of God. In Christ are all the promises of God and in Christ is the very mercy of God.

So, when I believe Christ, when I receive Christ, when I embrace Christ, and when I rest in Christ, then I am resting, trusting and believing all the Word, all the promises and all the mercy of God.

This is the reason John said in First John 1:10 through 12: *“This is the record, God hath given unto us eternal life. This life is in His Son. He that hath the Son of God hath life. He that hath not the Son of God, shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him.”* You see; in First Corinthians 1:30, it says, *“Of Him are you in Christ who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. In Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”* Do you see what I am saying? Everything is in Christ.

Paul said, *“I preach Christ and Him crucified. I determine to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ.”* When you preach Christ, you preach God. Christ is God. When you preach Christ, you preach the Word of God. *“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was made flesh.”* When you preach Christ, you preach the promises of God. When you preach Christ, you preach the mercies of God. When you preach Christ, you preach the wisdom of God, the righteousness of God, the redemption and the sanctification of God. The reason is because it is all in Him! Do you understand what I am saying?

How does this saving faith generally come to a person? Can you believe God? Can you look to Christ and believe Christ? How does this saving faith generally come to a person? How does God work faith? *“For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.”* How does God work faith? How does a person generally come to faith ordinarily? I know that God works when He will with whom He will and the way He will. I can give you four or five things, if you will listen:

First of all, how does God generally work faith? The Lord, by the Word, is never without the Word of God *“God hath chosen by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”* God, generally by the Word and through His Spirit will convince a man of sin. If you are not lost, you will never be found. If you are not a sinner, you’ll never be saved. If you are not guilty, you do not need grace. Christ died for sinners and Christ died for the ungodly. *“Christ came into the world to save sinners.”* He said, *“I didn’t come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”* This is a prerequisite. This is necessary. A man has to be convinced that he is lost and that he is a sinner. Our Lord

said, *“When the Holy Spirit is come, He will convince the world of sin, righteousness and unbelief.”*

Secondly, the Lord by His Word and by His Spirit will not only convince a man that he is a sinner but He will shut him up to His mercy in Christ. That man will discover that there is no way to God by human merit. There is no way to God by human works. *“By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. It is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by His mercy He has saved us.”* Paul said, *“When the law came, I died.”* In other words, *“In the flesh, no man can please God.”* So, we are shut up to mercy. We are shut up to His help, and to His will. The leper said, *“Lord, if You will, You can make me whole.”* He certainly needed it and he couldn’t make himself whole.

Thirdly, the Lord will then, by His Word and by His Spirit, reveal Christ to that sinner and to that sinner’s heart as his Redeemer. He will reveal Christ in his life as our righteousness and Christ in His death and by His blood, as our atonement. We will find out who died on that cross and why He died on that cross and where He is now. The Lord, by His Spirit will reveal that salvation is in Christ. Because He died, I don’t have to die. He lived a perfect life and it counts to me for righteousness.

Fourthly, the Lord, by His Word and by His Spirit, will work repentance and saving faith in that sinner’s heart. *“He will make us willing in the day of His power.”* The goodness of God will lead us to repentance. He will grant us eyes to see Christ. He will give us ears to hear His voice and a heart to love Him. Then, the Lord by His Word and by His Spirit will continue to reveal Christ. We will grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. Day by day, as we feast on the Word and feed on the Word and feed on Christ, we will grow and come to know Him better. You see, *“We have been saved, we’re being saved and our salvation is nearer than when we believed.”*

Last of all, there is the confidence of faith. You might ask, “The Word of God gives us assurance?” Yes, the Word gives us assurance, but God Himself is the confidence and assurance. God is Almighty, God is unchangeable and God is faithful. *“He will never leave us and He will never forsake us.”* Our confidence is not in ourselves but in the one who saved us!