

I BELIEVE BUT I'M NOT A CHRISTIAN

MARK 9:23-24 • TV126B

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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.

Let's open our Bible this morning to the book of **Mark the 9th chapter**. I am going to read two verses from **Mark chapter 9 verses 23 and 24**.

My subject this morning is: **"I BELIEVE BUT I AM NOT A CHRISTIAN."** Does that interest you; I hope that it does: **"I BELIEVE BUT I AM NOT A CHRISTIAN."**

In **Mark 9:23** the Scripture says: *"Jesus said unto him: if you can 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."*

A few days ago I visited a man in the hospital at the request of his sister. She said he was not saved and he did not know Christ. He was up in years and very sick and asked if I would visit with him and I did.

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After we introduced ourselves and passed the time of day, I presented this question to him: “are you a believer?” I think that is a better question than “are you a Christian?” Just about everybody in our day is a Christian.

We call ourselves a Christian nation and we have a Christian flag and we have Christian hymns, Christian schools, Christian politics, and everything like that, that doesn’t even smell like Christianity. So, I just quit asking that question: “are you a Christian?”

I believe it is a better question to ask: “are you a believer?” Do you know what he said to me and I think it is a good statement. If I can explain it to you what he meant, I believe it will help some of you because I think there are thousands of people in this same condition.

He looked straight at me and he said: “I’m a believer but I’m not a Christian, I’m a believer but I’m not a Christian.” What did he mean?

If I can explain to you what he meant; I know what he meant; I know exactly what he meant. If I can explain to you what he meant it will answer some vital and important questions for you. It may even meet the need of someone out there in the same condition.

Now here’s what he meant:

First of all: He believed in God!

Most men believe there’s a God. You don’t find many people who do not believe there’s a God. **Psalm 14: 1** says: *“The fool has said in his heart there is no God for me. The heavens declare the glory of God. The firmament showeth his handiwork.”*

Men may refer to God by many different names. They may call Him “the man upstairs” or they call Him the “good Lord.” They may call Him “the great Spirit.” They may call Him “the great Allah” or they may just call Him “God.”

They may call Him many names, but everybody, nearly everybody has some understanding that there is a God. Even the devil knows there’s a God. James says that; he said: *“You believe in one God; you do well. The devil believes in God, the devil believes in God and trembles.”*

But this is not salvation. A man can believe in God and not be saved. It’s like Christ said to those people who I was talking about last Sunday. They said: *“We have one father, even God. We are Abraham’s seed.”*

These people were going through all the motions of religion and Christ said: *“you don’t know God.”* They believed God and they believed in God but they didn’t know God.

So, a man can believe God and not be saved. He can believe in God and not be saved, believe there is a God. That’s what this man meant first of all; he believed in God. He believed there was a God but he wasn’t a Christian.

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Secondly: He believed that God is holy!

If you would have asked him: “is God holy?” He would have said: “certainly; I believe God is holy.” God has given us a law called the Ten Commandments. Like Isaiah said: *“In the year that King Uzziah died; I saw the Lord high and lifted up. His train filled the temple and the cherubim’s and seraphim’s cried: holy, holy, holy, is Lord of hosts.”*

Even the demons know that God is holy. They said one day to Christ: *“We know who you are; you are the holy one of God. Have you come to torment us before our time?”*

They also believed in Judgment and they believed in punishment of sin. *“Have you come to torment us before our time?”*

They believed that God was sovereign, that He had set up a time for them to be dealt with, judged and committed into eternal hell.

Pilate believed in the holiness of Christ; he said: *“I find no fault in this man.”* Pilate’s wife said: *“I have suffered many things in a dream because of this man’s innocence. This is an innocent man.”*

Judas said: *“I betrayed innocent blood.”* The centurion said: *“surely this man is the son of God.”* I believe there is a God. I believe God’s holy that God has given a law called the Ten Commandments and God is holy.

Thirdly: Then, this man meant this: “He believed the Bible is the Word of God.”

Now; you cannot account for the Bible’s existence without believing it is the Word of God. Where are the books written by men over 300, 400, and 500 years old? There are hardly any.

This Book was written and began 3,500 years ago, three and a half millenniums and it’s crossed the barriers of nationality, of class, of age, of years, of generations and dispensations. It’s the same today; it’s the Word of God.

You cannot account for its power over the lives of men. There’s no single Book that has ever exercised such power over one man, let alone over nations, and millions of people.

Its power, its holiness; yes, even Satan quoted the Scriptures. He said to Eve: *“Hath God said ye shall not eat of the tree?”* He said to Christ: *“It is written, he shall give his angels charge over thee.”*

Salvation is not in a Book it is in a person. Salvation is not in just believing there is a God and believing God’s holy and believing that the law is the law of God and believing the Bible is the Word of God.

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You can believe every one of those things and not be a Christian, not be saved. This man believed; this is what he meant: “Yes; I believe, I believe but I’m not a Christian.”

Fourthly: I will tell you something else he believed; he believed that he was a sinner!

Yes sir, he certainly did. To some extent all men believe that they are sinners. There are very few people; there may be some weird, religious folks, who claim to be perfect but nobody in his right mind believes he’s perfect.

Everybody knows he’s a sinner. He knows in his thoughts that he’s a sinner, in his imagination’s he’s a sinner, and even in his dreams he’s a sinner. Everybody knows that. *“We know we’ve sinned and come short of God’s glory.”*

Even king Saul said: *“I have sinned.”* in his pride. Even Balaam said: *“I have sinned.”* Even Judas said: *“I have sinned.”* *“If we say we have not sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”*

“If we say we have no sin we have made God a liar.” God forbid that any man call God a liar; all men are liars. *“Let God be true and every man liars.”*

But men know they are sinners. They believe they are sinners. This man believed that he was a sinner. But, that’s not salvation.

People talk about confession being good for the soul; it may be but it won’t save the soul. It may make you feel better but it won’t erase your sins on the records of glory. So, just believing you are a sinner won’t save you.

Fifthly: This man believed also that Jesus Christ lived on this earth, died, and rose again!

Yes sir and you do to. You believe; you know that a man called Jesus Christ lived on this earth. Only a fool would deny His existence. The calendar tells us that Jesus Christ lived on the earth and died. We measure time by B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (the year of our Lord).

He was here, He was here. He died on a cross but that’s not salvation. It says in **John 2:23:** *“Many believed on him when they saw the miracles which he did but Christ did not commit himself to them for he knew what was in man and needed not that any should testify what was in man.”*

They believed with the head, not with the heart. They were convinced that he was some mighty prophet. Even Nicodemus called Him *“Master.”* Even the rich, young, ruler called him *“Master.”*

Even those people cried when He rode into Jerusalem on the donkey: *“Hosanna, Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.”*

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The Pharisees said, “Master; make your disciples behave; make them quit calling you the Son of David. Make them hush.” They believed He was a good man.

But anyone who knows anything about Scripture and eternal life knows that salvation is more than mental agreement to facts about God, Christ, the Bible, the law, holiness, and these things. Salvation is more than that.

When this man says: “I believe, I believe there’s a God, I believe He’s holy, I believe that the law is His law, I believe the Bible is His Word, I believe I’m a sinner, I believe that Christ died on the cross and was buried again.”

Anybody who knows anything about the Scriptures knows that salvation is more than mental agreement with these facts. You can walk down an aisle and shake a preacher’s hand and say: “I believe every one of those things” and you may still perish in your sin.

Because salvation my friend, according to the Bible is a new birth: *“except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* Salvation is a new creature, a new creation. *“If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.”*

Salvation is having a new Master. *“He that loveth father, mother, more than me, husband and wife more than me, brother and sister, more than me, yea, his own life also, cannot be my disciple: And whosoever among you doth not take up his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”*

Now this is what the man meant: “I believe the facts, I believe the facts. I believe the fundamentals but I’ve never been conquered by Christ. I’ve never been conquered; I’ve never been broken by the Spirit of God.

“I’ve never been shut up to faith in Jesus Christ. I’ve never been brought to my knees in truly, godly sorrow over sin, repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ. I’ve never made Christ my King, and Lord, my refuge, foundation, and hope. I’ve never committed myself to Him.”

“I believe the facts. I’ve heard them rehearsed over and over again. I’ve heard them stated until I can recite them myself but I’ve never been conquered. I’ve never been made a new creature in Christ. I’ve never been born again by the power of God’s Spirit. I’ve never been quickened together with Christ. I’ve never been brought to peace. Christ said: *“my peace I give unto you. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”*

“I’ve never enjoyed any rest of soul, or rest of conscience, or peace of heart in Christ Jesus, so therefore, I’m a believer but I’m not a Christian. I believe the facts.”

And my friend; let me tell you something: most of our churches in this generation have preached a little old simple, easy, religious belief, and have told people they are saved, we have led them down the “Roman Road” and we have said to them: “pray the sinner’s prayer and shake my hand and join our church and you are bound for the promised land,” and this is just not so!

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“If any man be in Christ he’s a new creature.” If a man’s not been born again by the Spirit of God he will never see the kingdom of God. *“If our righteousness does not exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees we shall in no wise enter the kingdom of God.”*

“Except you be converted and become as a little child you shall never enter the kingdom of God. Except you repent you shall all likewise perish.” That is what the Scriptures teach!

So, it’s not just believing some facts and giving mental assent and mental agreement to some facts and fundamentals as we call them, but it is being regenerated, quickened, and born again and made to know and to love, to submit to, to surrender and to receive the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what’s the problem? Well, it could be many things. It might be one thing or it might be a combination of things but I think I can sum up some of them. Here’s the problem.

I’m a believer of the facts! I give mental agreement to the facts. I give mental agreement to the fundamentals but I’ve never been conquered. There are a lot of preachers who have never been conquered by Christ; consequently, they have never been saved.

There are a lot of deacons and elders and Sunday school teachers who have never been conquered by Christ. Oh, they will put on a good show and they put up a good front. They carry on a lot of religion and they play church a lot. But they’ve never been conquered and they know they’ve never been conquered.

They’ve never been brought to love Christ. *“If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ let him be accursed.”* If any man say: *“I love God and hate his brother; he’s a liar and the truth is not in him. By this shall all me know you are my disciples if you love one another.”*

Have you been conquered by Christ? Our Lord breaks the wild ass’s colt; He humbles the spirit and brings men down, He brings them down.

He takes the starch out of them and the pride out of them and the arrogance out of them and shuts them up to faith in Him. They become His children; children of God reveal the fruit of the Spirit and the evidences of the new birth.

What’s the problem? Here they are, one, two, or three of them:

First of all: Most men, most people, do not know the depths of sin, they do not know the dangers of sin!

Listen; here’s one of the greatest religionists of his day, Saul of Tarsus, one of the greatest religionists of his day. If he would have been living today, he would have been president of somebody’s denomination, even in his unsaved state.

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He said: *“I have not known sin.”* He didn't know what sin was. The apostle Paul before he met Christ and before the Spirit of God brought the true knowledge of sin to his heart, he thought sin consisted of only outward acts. He thought he was perfect. He thought he was blameless. He thought he had kept the law.

My friend; sin is a nature, it's not just an act, it's a nature. Sin is a principle. Sin is an evil nature within that result in acts of transgression and iniquity without. That's what sin is.

Sin is not just an act, sin is an attitude and the law of God condemns the thought as well as the act. *“To offend in one point of the law is to be guilty of the whole law of God.”* Men do not know the depths of sin. They do not know what sin is. *“I have not known sin.”*

The average person thinks that sin is only an outward act and if they do not commit certain outward acts they are without sin. But, sin is a nature. It is a principle within. It is a principle of nature with which we are born.

A man does not become a thief because he steals an object. He steals that object because he is a thief in his heart. A man does not become a killer because he takes somebody's life. He takes that life because the hatred was already in his heart.

That's what Christ said: *“You've heard it said by them of old times; thou shall not kill. I say unto you to hate is to be guilty of murder. You've heard it said by them of old times; thou shalt not commit adultery; I say unto you the thought of lust is sin, (lust in the heart).”* Desires and yearnings for that which is forbidden in the heart is sin.

Our Lord said: *“You've heard it said by them of old times; don't swear; I say unto you, yes is sufficient, no is sufficient, and anything more than that is sin.”* So boy, I tell you; the average person doesn't know what sin is or we would be crying *“God be merciful to me the sinner.”*

But, we run around with a pious look on our faces and great, big, good, Samaritan Bible under our arms and a cross in our lapels and try to smile and act like Mr. Piety himself, you know.

“God looks not on the outward countenance, he looks on the heart” and He sees what you think, He sees what you imagine. He sees what you desire and He sees what you are inside.

Somebody said, *“There are three of us.”* There's the person that we think we are and the person other folks think we are and the person God really knows we are. We need to come to get acquainted with that person.

If we did it we would cry like Job: *“I hate myself.”* We would cry like Isaiah, *“I'm a man of unclean lips, dwelling amongst a people of unclean lips.”*

If we could know the depths of sin, if you ever know the depths of sin, you will know the dangers of sin: *“the soul that sinneth it shall surely die.”* God says: *“It shall die. The wages of sin is death.”*

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God will have no mercy upon sin, not when we try to stand in our own righteousness. Now in Christ you will find some mercy but not in your own merit.

But you don't need Christ until you become a sinner. No man will ever be saved until he's lost, plum lost. You say: "Well, I've never been lost." That's the reason you're not saved. No man will ever cry for mercy until he's guilty, guilty:

"Let every mouth be stopped and all the world become guilty, before God, (not guilty before men but before God)." David said, "Against thee have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight."

No man will seek a Saviour until he knows the curse of the law and longs to be delivered from it. That's the first problem.

Second: Men do not know or understand the holiness of God!

The average person thinks that God, you know, can look down and if a fellow's done wrong He can just sort of, you know, put His tongue into His cheek, you know, and overlook it and be good and just overlook it.

Wait a minute! God's holy. How holy is God? Just how holy is God? I will tell you; God is too holy, God is too holy to embrace even His own Son when His Son is bearing our sins; God is too holy to look on sin with favor.

Who is that on that cross? That's the Son of God and God turned His back, He turned away from His Son. Why? It was because of His holiness.

How holy is God? He's too holy to accept even the best person on earth without perfect righteousness. *"The man at his best state, (the Bible says), is all together vanity."* God is too holy to accept any righteousness, any so-called goodness, any works, unless they are perfect.

You've never done a good work in your life. Now, you've done some good works according to men's opinions but no good work before God because it has to be perfect.

A prayer must be a perfect prayer, a gift must be a perfect gift, a work must be a perfect work and righteousness must be a perfect righteousness or God can't have anything to do with it. God can't.

When you say, "What in the world are we going to do," well; we have got to have Christ, you see. Our works are in Him, our faiths in Him and our confidence is in Him. Paul said: *"I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:"*

"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved and gave himself for me." Christ said, *"Without me you can do nothing."* Anything you do is less than perfection and God can't accept it; He's too holy.

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This is our problem. “Well, I just think God, you know; God is too good to send a man to hell.” Well, wait and see. He wasn’t too good to let His Son die on a cross and bear our hell. In fact, His goodness put Christ on the cross.

His holiness put Christ on the cross because He could not save sinners and still be holy unless somebody died for them. God’s too holy to accept any sinner: *“In the flesh dwelleth no good thing. In the flesh no man can please God.”*

Then, how holy is God? He’s too holy to forgive sin without a sin-offering, just too holy.

Thirdly: Men do not know the depths of sin or the dangers of sin and they do not know the holiness of God and they do not know the only true way of redemption

Now listen to me: *“For God so loved the world.”* God loved sinners. God purposed to save sinners. God determined to save sinners. He’s going to have a people. Heaven is going to be populated with a people just like Christ.

God so loved in His mercy and grace that He gave His Son. He gave His Son, what for? He gave His Son to be our representative. Without Christ we have no representative before the law, before the courts of heaven, and before justice. Before God we have no Representative, no Mediator.

He gave his Son to be our Representative. He gave His son to be our Surety. *“He’s the surety of the everlasting covenant.”* Do you know what a surety is? Do you ever sign a bank note? Did you ever have a friend sign it under your name as your surety?

If you don’t pay it, he will. If you can’t pay it, he must. Christ is my Surety. *“He’s a surety of the everlasting covenant.”* He signed His name and He paid it. I couldn’t pay:

**“He paid it all
All the debt I owe
Sin left a crimson stain, (bankrupted me)
But he washed it white as snow.”**

He gave His son to be our Surety. He gave His Son to be our Redeemer: *“in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin.”*

He gave His Son to be our sin-offering: *“By one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified.”* He gave His Son to be our Mediator, He intercedes for us before the throne of God.

What’s the problem? Men do not know the depths of sin, they do not know the holiness of God, and they do not know the only way that God almighty can be just and justify the ungodly and can be a holy Saviour and redeem the lost. They don’t know. God can only save sinners one way and that’s by a perfect substitute and sacrifice, Jesus Christ.

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Fourth: Many men have some sort of refuge; they have some sort of refuge in which they trust

Let me tell you something friend, you beware of any refuge that does not have Christ as the sole hope, any refuge. You just beware of it. If somebody says: “Are you a Christian or are you saved and you say, “well, back yonder I did this and back yonder I did that;” it’s back yonder that Christ did something, not that you did something.

If Christ is not the sole hope of your refuge you have got a false refuge. Beware of any refuge that does not give you a love for Christ and a love for others. *“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you love one another.”*

Beware of any refuge that does not give you peace, and joy, and rest. It’s not in what you do, but what Christ did. It’s not in your righteousness, because you realize you are the chief of sinners; you are, *“less than the least of all the saints.”*

You are not worthy to be called a child of God but Christ died for your sins and you have peace and rest in Him, trusting Him, in His Word.

Beware of any refuge that does not give you a desire for holiness and a desire for truth and a hunger for righteousness. Beware of any refuge that does not find its full assurance in Christ and his blessed work.

Sixth: There’s another thing that keeps men from Christ and that is pride!

“Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before the fall. God resisteth the proud. He gives grace to the humble.”

“Well, I’m as good as anybody in the church.” Perhaps you are. I am quite certain you are but you’re not as good as God and He’s the one that’s going to judge you.

“But, I tell you; I’m just about as good as anybody that you’ve got down there.” You are just as right as you can be, my friend. You are as good as any man on this earth. That’s one worm comparing himself with another worm, one maggot bragging on the fact that he’s a little cleaner than another maggot.

But you are not clean and holy and righteous as God and He’s the one who is going to judge you and that’s the one you’ve got to deal with.

What shall I do preacher? Let me read you a verse of Scripture in **Isaiah 45:22** Christ said, *“Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth, (Jew, Gentile, white, black, rich, poor, old or young) look unto me and be ye saved. Look unto me all the ends of the earth for I am God, I’m God and there’s none else.”*

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Pagans have looked to their idols of stone. Legalists have looked to their laws and works. Religionists have looked to their leaders and theologies and messiahs. Sentimentalists have looked to their decisions. Intellectuals have looked to their philosophies but there's one source of mercy and that's Christ Jesus.

There's one source of health and grace and that's Christ Jesus. There are two reasons why He's the only source of health:

First of all: He says: *"I am God!"*

God is the one we've sinned against. God is the only one who can forgive us. God's the one that we have sinned against and He's the only one who can pardon.

So, He says: *"You look to me and I will save you because I am God."* We need the God-man to save us. Man can't do it. We couldn't save ourselves.

Men have tried and tried to build a tower to heaven. They have tried all different things but they have always perished in their trying: *"Look unto me and find God."*

Secondly: He says: *"You look to me; I'm God and there is none else"*

That's what the disciple said one day: *"To whom shall we go?"* Shall I go to the baptismal fount? Shall I go to the sacraments? Shall I go to the priest? Shall I go to the preacher? Shall I go to the altar? Shall I go to some soul-winner; they can't help themselves, let alone me.

Go to Christ. He's the Mediator. He's the sin-offering. He's the one and only way. He said: *"I am the door and by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved and go in and out in find pasture."*

"I am God; look to me, I am God and there is none else."

"Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Christ the Lord!"