

Lesson 6

Believing God

Or

The Problem of Doubt

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Faith is the key that unlocks the world of the supernatural. The spiritual world is more real than the physical world and it is through trusting in God that the Christian begins to experience the realities of the spiritual world.
- B. God's command is "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22). Faith in itself is worthless, but faith that has God as its object can accomplish mighty things. The power is not in a person's faith but in the person's God.

II. PRAYER AND ITS CONDITIONS (Heb. 11:6)

- A. If a Christian wants to please God, he can only do it through exercising faith. It is absolutely impossible to please God in any other manner. NOTE: God is pleased with the Christian's works but all works are the result of faith. Faith is the one thing that genuinely pleases God, for it is acknowledgment of one's total dependence upon God.
- B. A Christian must believe that God exists ("He is"). Faith acknowledges God's person and power and believes that He is a prayer hearing and answering God. Obviously no one will pray if he believes that God is a hoax.
- C. The confidence of the Christian who believes that God really exists is that this same God will reward him because of his belief. But this rewarding is only open to those who "diligently" seek God through faith.
- D. Since God really exists, then He is able to meet our every need and do exceedingly and abundantly above all that we can ask or think. The life of D.L. Moody is an example of this:

The late D.L. Moody was conducting a great religious campaign in Chicago during the World's Fair Exposition in 1893. He had brought great religious leaders from all over the world—and that was an expensive undertaking. On a certain day many bills and salaries had to be paid. It would take \$3000 to meet such financial obligations. Mr. Moody, with some other Christian workers, knelt down and prayed about the matter. Mr. Moody prayed in his unique way: "O Lord, I am sorely in need of money; I must have \$3000 today. I could raise it if I had time to go out after it, but, Lord, I'm booked to preach at the Great Northern Theatre at noon today and its half-past eleven now, and I must be there at twelve. Now Lord, in Thine own way, as Thou hast so often done before, please send me the needed money to carry on Thy work. Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me." And he arose, picked up his hat, and went down to the theatre to preach. While he was on the stage waiting to preach a lady came to one of the ushers and asked him to take her to Mr. Moody, for she had a message for him that must be delivered to him in

person. The usher, naturally, refused, and said he would take the note to Mr. Moody. But the persistence of the lady won out, and the usher took her to Mr. Moody to whom she handed an envelope. Mr. Moody, thinking it was a question someone wanted him to answer and not having time to attend to it at that moment, put the envelope in his pocket, and proceeded to preach. When Mr. Moody, later, came to the dinner table with his fellow-workers, he remarked, "O, I had an envelope handed me today; I wonder what it is about?" He opened it, and to his surprise there was a check for \$3000, signed by Mrs. Cyrus W. McCormick, wife of the harvesting machine manufacturer.

Mr. Moody went at once to see Mrs. McCormick. She told him that at about eleven-thirty (the very hour that Mr. Moody and his workers had been in prayer) something told her that Mr. Moody would be needing money since he was conducting such an extensive campaign; so she sat down and wrote a check for \$1000. Then a second thought pressed her—that she should enlarge the check and make a new one for \$2000. She then, after a third thought, made a new check for \$3000, put it in an envelope, stamped it, and rang for her servant to mail the letter. And then another thought came to her; perhaps Mr. Moody needed the money that day. So she found out where Mr. Moody was preaching at that hour and sent her maid with the letter, giving her strict instructions to see that the letter was placed in Mr. Moody's own hand.

III. PRAYER AND FAITH

- A. Definition of Faith. Faith is really indefinable. Someone has said that faith is "simply trusting in God's faithfulness." God's faithfulness is made known to us through the Bible. Thus faith is believing the promises of God as found in the word of God. It is taking God at His word and holding God to His word. Real faith is devoid of any feelings. The proper order is always FACT, FAITH and FEELING. NOTE: The Bible defines faith: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1).
- B. Promise for Faith (Mark 11:23-24). This is one of the most remarkable promises in all the Bible:

For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

According to these verses nothing in earth or heaven is impossible and nothing unattainable for real faith. Any promise that God has made in His word or given to the individual as a fixed conviction, is possible. NOTE: This is assuming that all the conditions for prayer have been met. The vastness of prayer staggers the

human mind! We must give God an opportunity to prove Himself by putting Him to the test through our faith.

IV. PRAYER AND UNBELIEF

- A. Unbelief is the one major human factor that keeps God from giving us His many blessings. Unbelief is sin and exceedingly wrong before a holy God. If “without faith it is impossible to please God,” then unbelief, of course, is displeasing to God and is sin. If Jesus commanded, “Have faith in God,” then one who does not have faith in God is disobedient and rebellious. NOTE: Unbelief is a failure to claim what God has already promised. It is insulting God by challenging His character.
- B. James 1:5-7. If a Christian wants wisdom, he must ask God for it. He must ask in faith, nothing wavering. This means that he is not to have a divided mind of doubt when asking God for wisdom. The Christian’s faith must be squarely in the Lord; if it is not, then he shall never receive anything from the Lord. NOTE: Faith is being convinced, persuaded, sure that God is able to do what He said He would do.
- C. Judges 6:33-40. Gideon put out the fleece to determine God’s leading. Many scholars think this was an act of unbelief for God had already said that he would be God’s instrument to save Israel (Judges 6:12-14). Gideon wanted a sign rather than just trusting in God’s promise. God, in grace, did give Gideon a sign. NOTE: The fleece concept may be all right to confirm God’s leading but should never be used to determine the will of God.

V. PRAYER AND EXPECTATION

- A. Mark 11:24 says, “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” When praying, the Christian is to believe that he has already received the answer to the prayer. It may only be later that he shall have it in personal experience, that he shall see what he believes. Perhaps a person can thank the Lord for the answer even before it happens.
- B. The Christian must be expecting God to answer prayer. There is a constant anticipation of seeing how God is going to solve a problem that seems humanly impossible.

It is told of Hudson Taylor that at one time his prayers were the direct means of delivering the ship that was conveying him to his distant field and all her crew from a terrible fate. After the ship had been long on its way, hindered by calms and contrary winds, an island of the sea was sighted. It was recognized as the abode of fierce cannibals, who knew no pity. Just at this time the wind died away and the vessel lay helpless on the glassy sea, slowly but surely drifting on the fatal shore. With grim delight the island savages saw the plight of the ship and in sight of her crew made preparations for the coming feast of human flesh. The captain sought his missionary passenger. “You believe that God hears prayer. Call on Him. Unless your praying is the real thing we are doomed.” “I will pray,” quietly responded Mr. Taylor, “on the condition that you set your sails to catch the breeze that God will send.” The captain, who was not a believer, refused to make a spectacle of himself by unfurling the sails in a dead calm. Mr. Taylor was equally firm in refusing to pray until the ship was put in readiness to avail itself of the answer. Nearer and nearer the shore they

drifted, until in affright the captain unfurled the sails to receive the wind of which as yet they could see no sign. Mr. Taylor retired to his cabin and laid the case before the Lord. He quoted the promises and asked that since He had brought him so far on his way he might be permitted to carry on his work in the dark places of the earth. He, like Paul, besought the Lord to give him the lives of those on board. While he was still praying, there came a knock at the door. "Are you still praying for wind?" asked the captain. "Yes," was the response. "Well," said the voice, "You had better quit praying for we have got more wind now than we can manage."

- C. 1 Kings 18:42-46. The land of Israel was in a famine. God promised Elijah that He would bring rain to the land (18:1-2). Elijah prayed that there would be rain because he believed God's promise (18:42). Then he told his servant to go look for a cloud but there was not any and his servant went back seven more times (18:43). Then finally a little cloud began to form, and Elijah sent a message to Ahab the King that it was going to pour down rain (18:44-46). Elijah expected God to keep His promise and God did! That is what true faith really is.

VI. CONCLUSION

- A. The problem of doubt is universal among Christians, some to lesser degree than others. Believers will battle with doubt until they go to be with the Lord. Doubt, however, should not discourage us but cause us to push on in faith as we see our weakness of unbelief.
- B. We must remember that only faith pleases God, for faith is the one way the Christian demonstrates his utter dependence upon God. God's blessings come, especially in answer to prayer, when genuine faith is exercised.