

Understanding Unbelief

By B. D. Tate

There are two major areas of life's experience that prevent us from receiving from the Lord His promises: Doubt & Unbelief

For years I have interchanged them and thought very little about the differences; however if we are willing to investigate we will find answers and methods that will *overcome both in our lives*.

We all have doubts and because we do we can't relate to a Christian life without them; yet, doubts can be removed and dismissed through understanding what it is. We can overcome doubt if we KNOW GOD'S WILL.

We all have unbelief but much of it is unrecognized within our hearts. It is possible to have FAITH & Unbelief at the same time while that is NOT true for FAITH & DOUBT!

Unbelief is like weeds growing in our hearts preventing us from embracing greater faith. If we will identify unbelief as the weeds and remove it our confidence in the Word of God will remain steadfast and sure.

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Distinct from doubt, Unbelief means we *do not* believe what we've been promised or told. We know what the Word of God says but we do not believe it as it is. We don't believe God or have faith in God. We're not double minded we know what we're being asked to believe but we don't.

Mt 13:58 Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their **unbelief**.

Mt 17:20 So Jesus said to them, "**Because of your unbelief**; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

Heb 3:12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an **evil heart of unbelief** in departing from the living God;

The difference is subtle but real. Doubt occurs because we are between two or more opinions about God's will—we don't know. Unbelief simply doesn't believe the report (what we do know) in the first place. **Unbelief doesn't believe the promise or the one who made the promise will fulfill it.** Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness as this verse testifies:

Romans 4:20 He (Abraham) **did not waver at the promise** of God through **unbelief**, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,

21 and **being fully convinced** that what He had promised **He was also able to perform.**

By examining these two verses we get more clues as to what is involved with doubt and unbelief. Doubt waivers between two or more opinions as to what God's will is. Unbelief may produce wavering too but a different kind in our hearts. It is not from two opinions **it is from NOT being convinced God will perform what He said.** These verses tell us first that Abraham was fully convinced about God's plan—He did not doubt it. Abraham knew what God promised and was single minded about it. God was going to give him a son. Second, verse 21 says also Abraham was convinced "*He (God) was also able to perform (it).*" Unbelief, at least in this case, affects the **performance** of the promise not what is promised.

Unbelief from Wrong Teaching:

Jesus could do no great works in His own home town because of unbelief (Matt. 13:58). They must have heard of his miracles, healings, and power being performed everywhere he went; but because they knew who he was, where he grew up, who his parents are (They believed Joseph was his father, etc.), who his brothers and sisters are, they were offended at him and **would not believe**. In nearly thirty years of life living in his home town, working as a carpenter, Jesus didn't perform one miracle. He did not begin to preach the good news until he was baptized by John, anointed by the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18), and was tested in the wilderness. (An interesting fact is that the Law of Moses concerning the Levite priesthood was that no man could serve until the age of thirty. Jesus waited until he was thirty before answering God's call to ministry and to become our High Priest in the order of Melchizedek. Heb 5:10 called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek," He becomes our High Priest forever even though He was from the tribe of Judah.)

The people were offended, judged him harshly, considered him a common man, no one special; "***who does he make himself out to be?***" They would not accept him nor receive from Him even though he'd already been demonstrating the power of God in other places. **They did not believe in Him they'd already cast him out of their synagogue:**

Luke 16 So **He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up**. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.

17 And He was handed the **book of the prophet Isaiah**. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

18 "**The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me**, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to *the* poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to *the* captives And recovery of sight to *the* blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed;

19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."

20 Then He closed the book, and gave *it* back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him.

21 And He began to say to them, "**Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.**"

This was the time they actually wanted to hurl him down the cliff and kill him because he was making himself out to be the Messiah. They couldn't accept Jesus being the long awaited Messiah. **They didn't doubt that Jesus was the Messiah they were convinced that he wasn't.** One common held assumption of that generation was that no one would know where the Messiah came from and they knew where Jesus came from.

John 7:27 "However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, **no one knows** where He is from."

This teaching about the Messiah made it *impossible* for those who knew him to believe in him. **Therefore, belief in the truth can be thwarted by traditions, false sayings, myths, fables that have been embraced in the heart.** If we believe one thing and the truth comes along that is different from it our hearts *will not readily embrace the new thing.*

Unbelief from Loving Life More Than God

What we consider to be the truth, important and valuable we will be sensitive to; however what we ignore, deny, or reject our heart becomes hardened to instead. Unbelief can be the natural result of having something else already in our heart. We cannot have it both ways when it comes to the truth. We cannot *serve* two masters we must choose between God and money for example: Jesus said it this way,

Mark 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

20 "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

21 "**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

Unbelief is the by-product of having already believed something else more. It is like the fact that we can only have one *true love* in our life at a time. We cannot love two husbands or wives the same; we will love one over the other. Unbelief has to do with our heart's attachment to one belief over the other. I'm not saying that if we believe one way we can't believe the other. We can have both but one will be stronger than the other by affection. Unbelief doesn't cancel or eliminate belief or vice versa. Remember the father's plea over his demon possessed son, "I believe help my unbelief!" **Adultery** is a major theme when it comes to us believing and trusting God it's about having two lovers instead of one:

Eze 6:9 "Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations where they are carried captive, **because I was crushed by their adulterous heart which has departed from Me**, and by their eyes which play the harlot after their idols; they will loathe themselves for the evils which they committed in all their abominations.

The parable of the *Sower and Seed* from Mark 4 speaks about the condition of our heart to receive the Word of God:

Mark 4:14 "The Sower sows the word.

15 "And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.

16 "These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

17 "and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble.

18 "Now these are the ones sown among thorns; *they are* the ones who hear the word,

19 "**and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.**

20 "But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept *it*, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

Unbelief towards God comes from a **heart after other things**, cares of this world, and deceitfulness of riches. What we really believe first are the things around us, the things we can see, hear, feel, and touch, the things that we live with, can control, enjoy, the natural world is more important. What we really believe first in is our life, our loves, our desires and goals more than the Word of God. We don't fully embrace or trust or believe in the unseen realm of the Spirit. Unbelief toward God then is the direct result of living a carnal life—living like mere men.

1Jo 2:15 **Do not love the world** or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Unbelief comes from believing another source More.

Unbelief towards God is belief in another source. We trust the scientists and believe them rather than the Word of God. We trust the doctors and believe them rather than God's Word. *We trust preachers* even over what the Word of God actually teaches. We trust what we can see, hear, taste, smell, or touch more than what God's Word promises. *We believe the symptoms* more than the Word of God.

Mark 9:24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; **help my unbelief!**"

God requires us to embrace, trust, and put His Word into our hearts. God is after our hearts. The father of the child cried out and said with tears, "*Lord I believe; help my unbelief!*" Most of us can relate to this dilemma as part of our heart believing God's Word and part of our heart stuck in believing what we can see. We may want to believe God more than we do but we can't over ride what we've placed in our hearts. If we live daily to the world taking in its messages (reports), wisdom, knowledge, and **basing what we believe on it**; trying to change our hearts to trust God won't happen instantly. Our hearts grow in affection towards the things we admire, praise, value and focus on as worthy of our attention. What we consider, ponder, meditate on, imagine, dream about *sinks into our heart*. **We treasure** those things we have concentrated on. At the same time many other things **do not enter**

our heart because **we do not focus** on them such as the Word of God. This father has experienced the continual defeat and power of his child's condition. The disciples because of unbelief could not cure the child. The father brings the child to Jesus and says, "**But if you can do anything**, have compassion on us and help us." In verse 23 Jesus said to him, "**If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.**" This is such a foreign concept to the father and many of us. Naturally speaking we don't live or believe that way. We know many limitations, many obstacles, and many things we must accept the way they are. We know we are not in control and this father wanted Jesus to help in any way if he could. The father didn't know if Jesus **could**. The father wanted desperately to believe Jesus had the power but the disciples disappointing performance ***placed unbelief*** in front of him again. It was Unbelief because he didn't know if they or Jesus could *perform* the cure. The father knew they'd want to and he didn't doubt Jesus' willingness.

God judges the heart and from the heart all the issues of life are determined.

De 8:2 "And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, **to humble you *and* test you, to know what *was* in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.**

Pr 20:27 The spirit of a man *is* the lamp of the LORD, **Searching all the inner depths of his heart.**

Pr 4:23 **Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.**

When the father cries out "*Lord I believe; help my unbelief*" Jesus doesn't rebuke him for having both conditions. He doesn't tell him that because of his unbelief the child can't be cured. Jesus saw the faith of this man mixed with unbelief from a long time of living with this condition and being a product of the world. **What unbelief does ultimately is that it refuses, obstructs, cancels, thwarts, prevents permission—our hearts are not in agreement with God** (We are **not** believing God even *unknowingly* calling God a ***liar*** by our unbelief). Jesus used the father's belief (the little he had) to authorize his intervention. I think this a

powerful point. **If in our heart we don't believe then we have not authorized God to do His will in our life.**

I had a friend in High School who wanted to get saved. He came to me explaining that he'd done everything he knew to do. We reviewed the plan of salvation and said the sinner's prayer but he still did not feel God. I was young and inexperienced with anyone not receiving after praying. Being baffled by it and seeing my friend still in torment wanting to experience salvation, I brought him to my brother who was fresh out of Bible School. My brother reviewed the plan of salvation and the sinner's prayer just as I did—still no results. Then my brother did something I'll never forget, he said to my friend, *“If you have done everything God requires without results then deep inside you are **calling God a liar.**”* My friend was stunned and I was surprised to see it like that; yet, when those words sunk in my friend began to smile in his eyes then on his face because after recognizing the problem he repented inside and received his salvation—it was really awesome to see it happen. If we really do believe God and exercise faith in a matter we will realize that the problem (unbelief) is not with God but with us if we don't see results!

If I am selling candles or anything for that matter to you and after I have said my presentation I may look to get some kind of commitment for a purchase. What I'd be looking for is permission from you to order what I'm selling. I know that salespeople can pressure for a sale but God does not do that. God is not going to sell you something you don't need or really want. **He's looking to the heart.** A good salesman is also looking to the heart to justly satisfy a sale. Jesus looks to our heart in matters of faith, belief, doubt and unbelief. **The choices begin with what we are considering in our heart.**

Faith and belief therefore give God permission to operate through our hearts into our physical realm His Will. Faith agrees with God's Word and acts upon it. Believing is the basis that God is, and rewards those who trust, seek, and obey Him. Believing is setting the Word of God first and foremost in our hearts. **Belief translates as trusting God can do what He says and will do what He says.** Believing has to do with the nature of the God we worship and serve. God is love, compassion, faithful, and true—

believing this is paramount. We are sold on the fact that God will perform His word in our lives. Believing has to do with understanding that God has already given us His Grace, His Love, and His Spirit for everything we will ever need in this life and the life to come. What more could God give? **Belief then establishes the facts of God's will in our heart and faith responds to it.** Faith acts on what the heart believes. Unbelief strikes at our heart because of our sinful natures, our selfish perversions, and our hard heartedness towards God because of our love for the world. Unbelief raises its rebelliousness in our thoughts, meditations, and imaginations from what *we've been feeding on in life*. We can't stop all thoughts, imaginations, **but we can prevent them from settling in our hearts by obeying scripture like this one:**

2Co 10:5 **casting down arguments (imagination)s** and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing **every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,**

This may seem vague to us at first **but what we don't realize** is that our thought life turns into meditations and our heart attaches values to it. We can control this in Christ, through the screening of the Holy Spirit to prevent attachments to ungodly doubt and unbelief. The world, demonic desires, selfishness, and the flesh, all want to infiltrate our mind where it can get down into our heart. Unbelief therefore comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of the world in fear, doubts, and contrary teachings to the Word of God. Unfortunately, some fears, doubts, and unbelief in God's Word come from the **Church and religious training or teaching.** We must guard our hearts with all diligence by submitting thoroughly and consistently to God's Word and Spirit, **for our heart determines or give permission to what will happen in our life.**

We cannot get saved until we **believe in our hearts** what God promises then we act upon it—that is faith. Doubts make us think that God's promises are for others or are not needed etc...unbelief enters our hearts and so we act upon those beliefs—a type of faith operating against God's word. In most cases, this type of misguided faith from a heart filled with unbelief results in fear, worry, anxiety, and depression because we can't trust God.

Unbelief because we really don't know God's Heart:

Our hearts are the source of believing and/or unbelief. **It becomes imperative that we let the peace of Christ and the Word of God rule in our hearts (Col. 3:15).** It is vital that we learn to love, live in Christ, and adore God in our hearts so that we can **receive real belief in the nature of God.** God's love overcomes all fears or doubts that cause unbelief (I John. 4:18). We in essence are learning to trust God's word that He watches over it to **PERFORM IT!** We need a child's heart again that knows God has done it and it will manifest in our lives through patience, longsuffering, faith, and trust—**because we really do know God.**

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Believing is established because we embrace His promises as faithful and true. **We agree with the Word and what the Word teaches above everything else.** The Holy Spirit ignites, confirms, and bears witness that the Word of God is so. **From a heart that believes doubt is removed because we are not wavering but single minded about God's Will. From a heart that is established in God's love unbelief will be diminished and then destroyed because we really do believe God is faithful and will perform His will now.**

Ps 34:22 **The LORD redeems the soul of His servants and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.**

Ps 36:7 How precious *is* Your loving kindness, O God! **Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.**

Ps 37:3 **Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.**

Ps 37:5 **Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, **And He shall bring *it* to pass.****

Ps 71:1 In You, O LORD, I put my trust; **Let me never be put to shame.**

Isa 55:11 **So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; **It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.****

Php 1:6 being confident of this very thing, **that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it** until the day of Jesus Christ;

Unbelief from ignorance and being misguided:

God is faithful and is not *the variable with His promises*. He's already decided we are the ones who haven't been deciding God has done it. We are the variable that needs to establish God's Word in our hearts. Then it is a matter of addressing this current physical world, the fallen world situation, the hindrances of others, the demonic resistance, the curse in the earth, the rebellion in our flesh—the **lying vanities**.

For us to overcome doubt we must be convinced of God's will. We must know God's word and answer all questions of doubt thoroughly. To overcome unbelief we must be **full of God's heart**—love and compassion and full of the Holy Spirit. For us to know God's nature in our hearts and trust fully in His plan of action—that He's given us His name, grace, love, and Spirit to overcome the world, we must embrace that we are joined with Him and He abides in us. Then through the revelation of being sons and daughters of God we stand in authority, knowing His Will, His name, His purpose, and boldly act upon it because from our hearts we **BELIEVE IT!**

The Battle then isn't trying to convince God to move, have enough faith to move God, or beg enough so that God's compassion will move; no, God has moved, we are convinced of His will that He's already decided, **and God has given us the faith** to act upon it. As we move in the knowledge of the truth accepting his full grace and practice faith (without doubts), **we will see God's will manifest in greater and greater ways**. We will battle the forces of darkness, the resistance of the flesh, the doubts and unbelief of those we are ministering to, and **we'll see victory as the spiritual truth set in our hearts changes the temporal or fallen realities towards God's Will**.

Overcoming natural unbelief:

We've been watching a program on TV called the Dog Whisperer. Caesar Millan is a professional dog trainer and he empowers people with their pets. His confidence is contagious but even so those who apply his methods must practice. They do not jump right in and become like Caesar; however, **his intentions are that everyone he helps will become just like him.** In time, through practice and watching the changes they become more and more confident and then more proficient at applying his techniques. He speaks about proper energy, confidence, being the leader of the pack. When addressing unruly, untrained dogs **they might not respond completely immediately** but as he continues he wins over the dogs. His mantra is getting the dogs to become calm and submissive and for the owners to be calm and assertive. As Christians God wants us to be calm and assertive knowing from our hearts He has empowered us and then to address rebellion, unruly situations, and health that is out of line, hostility, anger, resentment, unforgiveness the fallen world in our lives and others. Like those who are being empowered we might feel nervous, unsure, fear failure, but we press on learning to be full of God's life and power. Speak with authority to the mountain, to our bodies, to our needs, to other's needs, and keep after them until they are calm and submissive! **Natural unbelief** occurs when we pray, speak, or assert God's will into the situation and then because ***we don't see immediate results*** in the physical world we slip into unbelief. The things of God are Spirit and God answers in our spirit for which we receive it ***by faith and then bring substance to it in the reality of this world.***

Mr 11:24 "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask **when you pray, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*.**

Heb 11:1 Now **faith is the substance of things** hoped for, **the evidence of things not seen.**

Jesus was the perfect representation of Christ on earth and His faith was pure with no doubts and no unbelief His performance was complete and mature. We are not without sin nature, without doubts and unbelief for which we fight the good fight of faith. Our practicing may take a little while to see better and more immediate results. Even Jesus couldn't overcome the unbelief in His own

home town; He had to pray for a blind man twice; and sent another blind man to wash in a pool which may have taken him an hour to find. Nevertheless, these verses tell us to believe and in time we'll see results:

Mark 16:17 "And these signs **will follow** those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;

18 "they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; **they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.**"

James 5: 14 is any infirm among you? Let him call for the elders of the assembly, and let them pray over him, having anointed him with oil, in the name of the Lord,

15 and the *prayer of the faith* shall save the distressed one, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if sins he may have committed, they shall be forgiven to him.

If we were in heaven then everything we said, maybe even thought would happen immediately but we are not in heaven we are in a fallen cursed world that is in rebellion towards God. We must understand that there are hindrances as I have listed already that do not want God's will done on the earth as it is in heaven. We have been given authority in His name and learning to exercise it may take addressing the issue more than once or even a few times. If we'd stop and remember many of us didn't exactly receive our salvation the moment we prayed for it. Many, like me, didn't have an immediate experience of assurance but over a few weeks going back and forth about it I finally settled into accepting that Jesus had saved me. Many when they prayed for wisdom or direction from God didn't receive it immediately but in time came to realize what God wanted them to understand and do. Many when praying for provision, a job, or some change in circumstances needed to wait weeks, months, or even years to receive the answer—it may take some time. **We need to look to the unseen realm** that is greater in power and might, eternally existing truths and realize that people, doubts, unbelief, hindrances, circumstances are in space and time. God would not exhort us to hold on if every time we prayed or spoke His word it happened immediately.

1Ti 6:12 **Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life**, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Heb 10:23 **Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.**

Jas 5:7 **Therefore be patient**, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. **See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.**

Ga 3:6 **just as Abraham "believed God**, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

When the father brought his son to be cured by Jesus' disciples the demon spirit within the boy **tore and tossed him to the ground with foaming around the mouth**. It must have been quite a scene. It probably was *shocking* to the disciples senses to see this happen and may have been the source for the unbelief. We know that Jesus told the disciples that it was because of their unbelief that they were unsuccessful in casting out the demon and curing the boy. Jesus went on to say that this kind of unbelief doesn't come out except by prayer and fasting.

Matt. 17:19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "**Why could we not cast it out?**"

20 So Jesus said to them, "**Because of your unbelief**; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

21 **"However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."**

If we can receive it, **then we can understand this (natural) unbelief has to be addressed by praying and fasting**. These two disciplines help us to *disconnect* from our natural dependencies to become more spiritually minded. Praying is a spiritual discipline that develops our spirit life. Fasting is used according to scripture to "break the bonds" of the flesh.

Isa 58:6 **"Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke?**

Natural unbelief is being carnally minded and believing things because we see, feel, taste, hear, or smell them according to the senses of the body. Praying and fasting breaks this pattern so that we can trust and depend upon God's Word as the true facts.

Unbelief is a lack of Confidence in God

Jesus said to the disciples "Have faith in God." We are to have a growing confidence in the compassion, nature, and love of God. **Many of us struggle with confidence that God will do what He says.** We lack confidence because we have asked in prayer, knocked on the door, sought the answers and **came away with nothing feeling very confused.** Maybe we've been disillusioned by the process and *instead of persevering through to find some answers*, we've decided to "not go there" again. A son who has been promised by his father to go fishing weekend after weekend will eventually come to the point of not believing his father. His wounded spirit will reason that his father is lying, pacifying, and misleading him at best. A wounded spirit is hurt, offended, angry, bewildered, and unable to come to terms or peace **because it is personal.** When we take it personal we have lost trust in the one making the promise. We aren't looking at the situation that God is hindered by limitations of doubt, unbelief, resistance, or time and space, but we believe God is against us (sometimes unconsciously). God doesn't approve of us, is holding back, and is choosing to not deliver, act, or answer. We are wounded because God answers others but not us; we may believe he is no respecter of persons but everything we understand about it says different. We don't understand what is going on but emotionally figure we are just not worthy, God's love is conditional towards us, He did not choose us like He's chosen others. In such a state we might just bury our disappointment, place it on the back burner, or avoid it altogether by ending the relationship (at least from the heart). With a wounded spirit towards God and the unexplained dilemma of having asked in Jesus' name but did not receive, **we often interpret it poorly.** I have been angry because although I'm to believe that God's word is true and God cannot lie, **everything about the disappointment is telling me otherwise.** What we do

then is reason, excuse, or explain away such experiences. We say or think, “God doesn’t heal that way any more.” Or “God works in mysterious ways and He is past finding out.” We’ll say, “God answers all prayers but just not in the way you expect.” The Church has a million explanations **but in the end we come away with little or no confidence because we can’t trust what we understand.** *Eventually we’ll shut down*, put our faith on auto-pilot, and live a *maintenance Christian life* holding on until the end. There is a great crisis of faith within us because we don’t understand *why* what the Word of God promises isn’t happening. When our experience is something other than the promise even after we have done or prayed, or believed all that we can understand, **we have no place to go.** What most of us do is *let go of the promise* and embrace some kind of anesthetic to numb us to our disappointment again.

We let go of God’s Word and find some solution that nine times out of ten is a human explanation but doesn’t line up with God. When we do, we lose the pressure-tension, the force, the power of faithfulness that **WILL BRING AN ANSWER!** We give up decrying how hard it is, how confusing and bewildering God is, and how it is too much. We don’t press on and stay in the game we get out, excuse it, re-interpret, re-define, and instead of sitting in the seat of defeat, loss, or lack, having not received, **we leave the faith that is narrow and join everyone else on the wide road of vague faith.**

Unbelief from the result of failure to receive

There are testimonies of brothers and sisters in Christ who having believed the promise, acted in faith, did not receive; yet, in time, maybe years later the answer to why came. It came because they said within themselves,

“I may not have received, I may not fully understand what I need to know, but there is one thing **I will not do and that is give up on the integrity and Holiness of God’s Word.** I will not compromise it; rationalize it, just because I didn’t receive. I will continue, I will press on; I will keep on exercising faith no matter what the outcome. God is faithful

I am the one who misses it, doesn't understand nor see, I am the one that doubts and has unbelief. **God is just, fair, true, and there are so many answers I do understand.** In time God will show me what is missing, what needs to be done, and what conditions I lacked. God has given me everything I will ever need and I know He loves me."

It is sin nature that demands to know and understand or it will not obey or continue to obey. It is the new creation that obeys and continues to obey even if understanding is not forth coming.

The truth is there is no joy in vague Christianity. If we are living lives that don't see God, experience the **supernatural** then our Christian experience is shallow and **superficial**. This may seem harsh but the reality of this must be faced. If we are drifting in life and have *shut down our faith* walk and refuse to take faith to deeper levels where God's Word proves true **then we have backed away.**

Heb 10:39 **But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.**

Heb 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith; **But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.**"

We shouldn't be surprised if our faith journey is attacked, buffeted, and even violently resisted (James 1:2; I Pet. 1:6). We shouldn't be shocked if the things of the Spirit and walking in them are difficult because the rewards are great. The salvation of souls is at stake and the demonic, the flesh, and this world is fighting to keep the sons of God from revealing the full grace of Jesus!

Mt 11:12 "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the **kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.**

We are in a spiritual war and fighting the good fight of faith takes determination and a willingness to be strong or forceful. The righteous develop indignation. The righteous do not give in, cave in, or give up. If it were easy then everyone would be jumping on board. The fact that most live the easy way or path, and do not struggle against sin tells us that our walk in Christ will require

commitment and courage. **God isn't going to pass onto His sons and daughters the pearls of His kingdom to carnal and shallow Christianity** (Matt. 7:6). We can't live to the world and expect to receive God's best too. Jesus said we cannot serve both God and money; we cannot serve our self and God too. **There are many times we will fail to understand and fail to receive what do we do when these times come?** If we let go of the promise because of the struggle, roadblocks, or lack of understanding, we will miss God settling for a superficial Christian experience. **May God's grace help us to not turn our frustration, anger, self pity, or wounded spirit towards God's Word and question, doubt, and not believe Him when we fail to receive.** No one likes to be at fault but we will not find answers if we question God's integrity. If God's Word and promise *or* my operation are in question as to why I didn't receive there really should be no trouble determining that I am the one missing it.

Unbelief because of Poorly Interpreting Failure

There are many success stories in life. I don't know of one that achieves success without failing many times. One of the more famous stories would be Abraham Lincoln who failed again and again to be elected at local, state, and even national levels. His perseverance paid off when his first victory was being elected President of the United States! I don't know how some people are able to suffer failure and keep on going as if it meant nothing. Many salespeople have developed a "thick" skin in being able to take no again and again until they find someone who says yes. Why do successful people continue to try after failures? **One of the main reasons is that they do not interpret failure poorly.**

Take for example this scenario: If we don't understand that our hearing is being influenced by our sin nature or that our hearing is being hindered by a hardened heart towards God **we'll be frustrated and begin to believe the wrong things about our faith walk with God.** Some of us may find ourselves feeling very frustrated about God's Word. We may have **tried to read it and found it difficult** to understand. We may have **tried to read it and felt bored** with it. We may **try to read it and are readily**

distracted by other things such as it being the time to watch our favorite TV program. With such frustration **we may conclude** that God didn't intend for me to understand it. We may think that **God has especially endowed some** with more spiritual life. We may think that we are **just not geared for spiritual things**. Some may go so far as to think, "I'm just retarded when it comes to understanding God and spiritual life." These types of interpretations can get into our heart and become areas of **unbelief about God or our self**.

I have already mentioned poor interpretations about failing to receive in the area of healing. **Here is a list of common Christian explanations:** God doesn't use everyone in the gift of healing or working of miracles; God's will is for some to be healed while others are to glorify God through their suffering; The time of miracles ended with the apostles; God uses miracles and healings only in the beginning to show that Jesus was the Messiah; Jesus died for our sins and healing is only spiritual; when we get to heaven then God fulfills all the promises of healing and provision; God's promises are yes and amen but reality is something else; if God wants to heal people He will; no one understands healing and God works in mysterious ways.

Many of these explanations **implant doubt in the hearts and minds** of Christians and once that happens James tells us that no one receives it if they doubt God's will or Word (James 1). Many interpretations are elaborate, scriptural applications, that have the ring of truth but when boiled down ***they are excuses (poor interpretations) for why we don't receive.*** **Most of the excuses absolve us of any responsibility for the failure to receive.** When we believe these answers we embrace integrated doubt. **We don't know we're in doubt because we believe the teaching is Christian; nevertheless, we've been taught doctrines of doubt.** We've been taught that God's will is past finding out or beyond this life—you'll never know. We've been given answers that make our experience trump what the word of God actually says. These interpretations rationalize, compromise, and justify failure. The thought that we could be responsible for failure is just too much to bear. The stress and the anguish of missing God trying to receive again and again and failing are not worth it and too much weight of

responsibility. After all, we are saved by grace not of works lest anyone should boast. God is the author and finisher and the one who does the good works in us (if they happen at all). The result: **we then turn our attention to human efforts and works of the natural realm.**

This to me is where most if not all Christians end up living their Christian life. The “good works” described in scripture are interpreted to be works that human beings can do that are good. If this is so then no one need feel a failure because everyone can be kind, good, considerate, giving, serving of others, and compassionate to some degree. Listen to this different explanation:

Let Your Light So Shine...

Jesus said: Mt 5:16 “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

If you are like me you thought about this as **being our effort** to do good things for God. That the light shining would be good works just like it says...when we are kind, thoughtful, loving, patient, treating others like we’d want to be; being faithful, honest, trustworthy, good...that these good works would be a light, guide, and an example to others (and they are to a degree). But there is a strange problem with this understanding, as much as others might like to receive such things, **I really don’t know of anyone who has glorified God in heaven because I did the right thing**, or showed someone kindness. Usually what happens is that the other person says, “**Thank you**, thank you so much!”

I usually do the same thing when someone is especially kind or helpful. When guys help me to do jobs or projects around my house I am very grateful for their expertise and help. But I don’t *necessarily glorify God* because they have done good works for me.

I think the problem is that our understanding of the light in this verse is missing something. When Jesus says let your light so shine we are thinking of our effort, heart, being, or game plan to do what pleases God. We think we are the light some how...

Another side problem is this, other religions teach good works. When other religious people practice these same good works *it really doesn't distinguish anything unique about Christians*. When a Muslim is kind, patient, thoughtful, when a Jewish person is treating others well, when a Buddhist is faithful, honest, and trustworthy, these things are no different from Christian integrity and honor...by the way they get the same results we do...people praise them and thank them but rarely does anyone glorify God in heaven. Jesus said that the world would know we are Christians by our love and that certainly includes the good works described above but there is far more.

There is however, a fuller understanding of this verse and others like it. At the heart of Jesus' teaching is this: Let your light, the God of your salvation, the genuine light of God's glory be seen through you. **And the works that Jesus does through you will be seen as a witness to the truth that God is in you and doing the good works that glorify God.** What are included in those good works? Jesus said, **John 14:12 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. John 4:48 Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you *people* see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe."**

When people see Jesus in us then they will glorify God in heaven! When the results of a true personal relationship with God are manifest through His love, with signs, wonders, and miracles, people will glorify God in heaven! It was the miracles, healings, and casting out of demons that the people saw and experienced that they responded by glorifying God in heaven!

We can live the Christian life generally two ways:

The first way is the best that human beings can offer; the second way is God's best being manifest in human beings. The first way focuses our energy on what we can do to the best of our ability. The second focuses on what God can do through our response to his ability. God is His own public relations officer, his own marketing plan, his own investment opportunity, and has his own way of catching the lost. Human efforts work through God's

mercy and grace in that our marketing, promoting, and having programs does lead to the salvation of souls; however, the down side is that most churches really are competing with the world and against other churches for souls. American Christians are notorious for shopping around and moving around from Church to Church depending upon what is happening. God's way was heal the sick, cast out demons, work the miracles that meet the needs of the people and when that is done we aren't competing with the world or with each other. When these signs follow believers God is glorified and people come by the thousands to be delivered and saved for they can see that God is real and among us (Mark 16:17). This is so important in a world with great confusion and many claims to truth. God's desire is that we should proclaim salvation in Jesus' name and *then* confirm it through the power of His love to deliver, heal, restore, and show the signs or proof of that proclamation.

Mark 16:20 And they went out and preached everywhere, **the Lord working with *them* and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.** Amen.

When we fail to have these signs follow us that is when interpretations fly to explain it away. We need to not "go there" but remain faithful to what is written despite what we are experiencing. God will turn it around for us, God will show us what we need to do, God will answer why we have failed and then show us the way to success. This will happen if we do not turn on Him, deny His word, question His faithfulness, or compromise His integrity. God wants us useful for His kingdom more than we want to be useful for His kingdom!

Unbelief, identifying it in our hearts

Eph 6:16 "...above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the **fiery darts** of the wicked one."

The fiery darts speak about what happens to us when we hear or see certain things in our life, in our imagination, ponderings, meditations, etc. that penetrates right through to our

inner most being. **We can identify something is in our heart because of how we respond and how deep it resonates within us.** If someone says something to us that has nothing within us we can readily cast it aside. Jesus describe this when he said,

“John 14:30 “I will no longer talk much with you, **for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.**”

Jesus was not threatened, concerned, moved, or shaken because Satan could not provoke or get a reaction from him. We allow others to get to us and cause us to react. We, in Christ, can be in a place where like Jesus, it has nothing in us. For example: If someone says to me, “You are a lousy accountant!” I am not moved because I have no experience, desire, or liking to be one. If that same person says, “You are a lousy preacher!” Then depending upon my own personal security I may allow his/her comments to penetrate into my heart. Someone might add that we should consider the source and not value his/her comments because they might be angry, jealous, foolish, or some other extenuating circumstance to explain the comment. **However it all depends upon the condition of my heart if I will respond or react.**

Jesus was so humble and empty of his own agenda that pleasing God was enough for Him. He was secure knowing that honoring God and not men was why He existed. Therefore he responded according the Will of God in every matter of His life. He did not react out of fear, anger, pride, or self will to defend his honor or fight for his rights...

John 5:41 “**I do not receive honor from men.**”

42 “But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you.

43 “I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.

44 “**How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that *comes* from the only God?**”

Jesus asks a very telling question in verse 44 which speaks volumes towards our own unbelief in God. We are more concerned

with pleasing and getting approval and honor from men and *this causes unbelief in God!*

Pr 29:25 **The fear of man brings a snare**, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.

The fiery darts that penetrate our hearts reveal the condition of our heart. Nothing will threaten us nor cause us to fear if it is NOT in our heart! **I can know my heart's vulnerability simply by being aware of those things that penetrate to my core being.** If someone says “Your house is going to burn up in a fire” I’m not especially moved I’m not thinking, imagining, nor fearing such a scenario. If someone says, “Your daughter is going to be attacked; kidnapped, lost on the bus (while she was in Jr. or Sr. High)!” Those words would have penetrated deeply. That is because I had fully embraced the fear of it. Fearful thoughts, imaginations, meditations get into our hearts because we embrace them taking them in. God wants our hearts to be fixed on His Will not the world. How do we know fears have our hearts? Watch and be aware of what “zings” your heart the next time someone says something or some show’s event, or some dream occurs. **The simple answer for the fiery dart issue is that we should be completely filled with the Holy Spirit, established in the Word of God, and responding to life the way Jesus showed us.** This is easier said than done.

The shield of faith is able to quench every fiery dart:

Eph 6:16 “...**above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.**”

However, if Christians are trained in doubt, faith as a shield is useless—we simply are not in faith. **Faith only operates where the will of God is known.** *If we are in unbelief our faith is being challenged* and we are wavering towards God’s Word. The shield of Faith is an arsenal for complete victory (if we remain in faith)! If we understand this then we can expect we will receive great resistance from the enemy as we develop in it.

Understanding the difference in how doubt and unbelief work:

If we don't know God's will we are in *doubt* and the shield of faith is useless (because it doesn't exist in that area); if we are in *unbelief* towards God's Word then the shield of faith is weak in our hearts and vulnerable to being circumvented. In our hearts we may be convinced of God's Will (having faith) however, **because of unbelief growing and abiding in us our faith will be challenged and often defeated.** It may be like two horses that are tied to an object and pulling in opposite directions. The stronger horse may win but it will take time. It may be like two dogs that are going to fight and the winner will be the stronger dog—the one that gets fed the most. **We overcome doubt by KNOWING GOD'S WILL FROM HIS WORD; we overcome unbelief by destroying its power in our hearts.** The shield of faith guards our heart because we know God's will and are established in it. **We trust and know God through the revelation of the Spirit therefore the shield is up and quenches the fiery darts.** This process must be applied to every area of fear, doubt, and unbelief in our heart. **Like a garden our heart will grow whatever we plant in it.** Seeds of doubt, fear, and unbelief are coming our way through the fallen world and our own sin nature. *We cannot stop the seeds from coming but we can prevent them from planting.* Planting occurs because of what we meditate upon, ponder over, submit our thoughts to, what we value and trust, and what we give power over us to.

Psalm 1:1 **Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;**

2 **But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.**

3 **He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.**

Our main failure begins with our unwillingness, ignorance, or lack of discipline to guard our thoughts and meditations. We have allowed our imaginations to run away with our hearts. We don't stop the world's bombardment of fearful, lustful, deceitful messages from coming into our eyes, or ears, mind, and then our heart. The struggle and effort, the pain, and work to obey God in this matter are often considered *too hard*. We want to live an easy

fast food life. The thought of having to be on guard all the time is just too much. We can easily loose our focus and wander away with our own sinful desires and selfish ambitions. **We can loose vision and purpose and not obey and find that our prayers are hindered and our faith challenged from within our own hearts because we did not weed out unbelief.** When we fail to receive because of our heart's condition we explain it away as somehow God's will for the failure. Some of us are integrated with doubt believing that we can't do anything about our fears, worries, personality, vulnerabilities, weaknesses, and unbelief. Everyone doubts, everyone fears, and everyone has unbelief so don't worry about it. We may not be able to completely remove such things from our hearts **but we can change the direction, size, and shape of our heart's ingredients.** God is after our heart knowing that from it determines the issues of life including faith to receive, faith to remove mountains, and faith to see signs, wonders, and miracles that glorify God.

Pr 4:23 Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it *spring* the issues of life.

How do we weed out Unbelief?

We must identify the weeds. Generally they will be fears, worries, and areas of deep concern. Some weeds will be doubts about God's will. Some will be confusion, some will be frustrations. As we look at our heart we might find brokenness, scars, and damage—"left-overs" as in a refrigerator. **God wants to heal our heart.** We might be afraid to look at our hearts for fear of what is there. I know that *past experiences* can be so painful just the thought of reviewing them is difficult at best. Sometimes the weeds exist as questions that have never been fully answered. Weeds will also be found as ***guilt and self dislike or even hatred.*** We might be surprised to find wickedness and dirtiness. Wickedness is a desire to control others for self gain, to manipulate, deceive, and/or to maintain superiority. Dirtiness could be immorality, sexual deviance, lusts and images, past experiences that have never been dealt with.

Some of the weeds will be planted by others. A father or mother, brother or sister, teacher, or coach, an adult, who may have repeatedly scolded, harassed, degraded, accused, abandoned, tormented, belittled, and/or disparaged you. People of influence can plant in our consciousness good or bad things when as a child our heart was open. Weeds of personal doubt and respect or confidence planted by someone else, may have deep roots of a lifetime of misery.

Some weeds will be harder to identify because of self image problems, self pity, of insecurity, and having a poor understanding of what good plants look like. Our ignorance of a healthy heart will cause us to struggle too. We can grow comfortable with our heart as normal when compared to the heart God wants us to have if it is off track.

Our greatest asset in discovering the weeds is God's Word enlightened by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We need God's Spirit to lead, discern, and convince us of those weeds that must go.

Weeds come in forms of doctrines, beliefs, and convictions that are not in agreement with **God's Word taught with faith**. The Pharisees knew the Old Testament thoroughly but it was not taught to them by faith. The traditions of the fathers passed down were the best explanations that carnal thinking could offer. The result was that the very Word of God stood in their midst and they rejected Him.

Mr 7:8 You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

We sing songs like:

"Lord I give you my heart; I give you soul;
I live for you alone. Every breath that I take,
every moment I'm awake, I live my life for you..."

But often these are just words on our lips; yet, God is the healer of a broken heart.

Ps 51:17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise.

What we really need to understand is how brokenness is what God is after so that He can work in our hearts. We need the

miracle of God's precious Spirit like a great Physician healing our hearts.

It would be prideful for us to think that we are capable of reviewing our heart and making the necessary changes. Our desire to have a heart after God requires God's intervention and residence. Here are some biblical disciplines that provide for God's work in our hearts:

- 1) Meditate upon God's Word. (Psalm 4:4)
- 2) Praise God with our whole heart (Psalm 9:1)
- 3) Humble our heart and prepare it with fasting for God (Psalm 10:17; Psalm 35:13)
- 4) Speak the truth (Psalm 15:2)
- 5) Trust God's counsel within our hearts (Psalm 16:7)
- 6) God speaks to us out of our heart's desire (if sanctified) (Psalm 20:4)
- 7) Purify our hearts in repentance (Psalm 24:4)
- 8) Let the Lord try or test our heart (Psalm 26:2)
- 9) Seek the Lord's face from the heart (Psalm 27:8)
- 10) Wait on the Lord in your heart be of good courage (Psalm 27:14)
- 11) Hope in the Lord from our heart (Psalm 31:24)
- 12) Cultivate a desire for God from our heart (Psalm 38:10)
- 13) Do not hide the things of God in our hearts they are for others too (Psalm 40:10)
- 14) Our hearts are open before Him God knows our thoughts (Psalm 44:21)
- 15) Pour out our hearts before Him (Psalm 62:8)
- 16) Do not set your heart on riches (Psalm 62:10)
- 17) A heart of wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord (Psalm 90:12)
- 18) Retain the Word of God in our heart (Prov. 4:4)
- 19) Guard and keep your heart with all diligence (Prov. 4:23)
- 20) Receive commands from the heart (Prov. 10:8)
- 21) Have a cheerful heart meditate upon the Lord (Prov. 15:13)
- 22) Study how to answer in our heart (Prov. 15:28)
- 23) Do not let your heart envy (Prov. 23:17)

24) Do not trust your own heart (Prov. 28:26)

The truth is that our hearts are evil and desperately wicked:

Jer 17:9 “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?

For us then to identify the Weeds of our heart and then remove them we need our relationship to God to be intimate and true. The whole process of identifying and removing the weeds of doubt, fear, and unbelief is a personal one that begins and ends in Jesus Christ our Lord. The most we can do is cooperate with His Spirit and yield to the working of grace to bring our hearts in unity with God’s heart. **The matter of the heart is God’s work in us.** We must yield, surrender, and truly give our hearts to God.

I can identify areas of weakness, stress, doubt and unbelief with the direction of God’s Spirit. I can obey God by casting down and putting away the sources that feed these weeds. The work of grace and bringing faith and belief together for our whole heart is God’s completely. I will have to trust God.

This teaching goes along with “Understanding Doubt” a booklet addressing another major area of defeat in receiving from the Lord His grace & mercy in His promises.