

Jesus Can: The Undoing of Unbelief

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[0 : 00] Brothers and sisters, given the sickness over the last few weeks or so,! We're tracking about that much behind, as it were, in some of our plans for ministry.

So please be patient with us and pray with us. I wouldn't wish it on my brother to come over to my house or meet me somewhere and me give this to him. So we haven't had much to do with each other over the last two or three weeks.

From a distance, texting, bro, I hope you're not dead yet kind of thing. But if you are, you're with Jesus and it's all good. So what I want to do is take you into the Gospel of Mark.

As I perused and prayed about where I might go in this first Sunday of the new year, I thought about Genesis. We'll get back to Abraham again.

He's in good hands. No worries there. I wanted to bring you a message that would allow me to speak to you about some things that have to do with new beginnings.

[0 : 58] We don't always have to do that. When we come to January. But it seems appropriate for us to think in these ways, especially as we think about how much the Scripture tells us to remember the good things of God and his track record with you over the time that you've known him.

Think about the fact that before you were saved, God kept you in a way that you would not physically die and end up in an eternal hell.

Think about that. Now, for some of you, I know you came close in some encounters to physically dying and leaving this planet and God preserved your life and you were saved subsequent to that. Think if you died in that moment. You would have died without Jesus. And you would have spent an eternity in hell. There's no second chance when that happens. God has preserved your life and brought you to the point where he saved you.

He brought you to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He revolutionized your life and he gave you a new beginning. And that's what he does. That's what God does. God saves us and gives us new life.

[2 : 06] God saves us and that new life in his name makes all the difference in who we are and in what our future will be because it's promised by him.

Now, we're going to be in Mark chapter 9 and I'm going to jump right into the middle of some things that are going on in the life of Jesus and his public ministry.

Mark chapter 9, a very interesting series of events. We'll begin in verse 14. When they, I'll tell you who they are in just a moment.

When they came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around the disciples and some scribes. These are some religious leaders that are arguing with Jesus' disciples.

Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Jesus, they were amazed and began running up to greet him. And Jesus asked these people, what are you discussing with them?

[3 : 14] And one of the crowd answered him, teacher, I brought you my son possessed with a spirit which makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and stiffens out.

That's quite a list of symptoms, isn't it? How terrifying for you to see your child like that. I told your disciples to cast it out and they could not do it.

Well, Jesus answered them here in verse 19 and said, Oh, unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you?

How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to me. Well, they brought the boy to Jesus. When he saw him, the boy saw him, immediately the spirit threw the boy into a convulsion and falling to the ground, he began rolling around and foaming at the mouth.

My goodness. And he asked his father, Jesus asked the dad, how long has this been happening to your son? And the father answered, from childhood.

[4 : 27] It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.

And Jesus said to him, if you can, all things are possible to him who believes. Immediately, the boy's father cried out and said, I do believe. Help my unbelief.

Very interesting. When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit, speaking directly to it. You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again.

Well, after crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of the people said, oh, he is dead.

But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him and he got up. When he came into the house, his disciples began questioning Jesus privately.

[5 : 35] Why could we not drive it out? And Jesus said to them, this kind cannot come out by anything but prayer. Now, what do we make of that?

What in the world are we supposed to see about our Lord, about ourselves, and about what this has to do with your walk with Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

You know, the same Lord that is sitting at the right hand of the Father in authority over all the spirits in the universe, right now, is the same Lord that did this. And that's the Lord you are saved by and you serve.

This is the Jesus you and I serve. And so what are we to learn about our Lord? And what does this say to us about our own walk with this Lord and Savior?

Well, the title of my message for this morning, Jesus Can. Jesus Can. I could have left it right there, but I wanted to adopt the title as well, almost like a subtitle from previous times when I've shared this passage.

[6 : 41] The Undoing of Unbelief, because that's the theme of this entire section, is the issue of Jesus overcoming unbelief. And then the greater thing that I want to point out to you today, Jesus Can.

Jesus Can. Now I want to say this to you, friends. Nothing in your life is beyond the grace of God. Nothing.

The love of God is the greatest power in all the universe. And the love of God can overcome and does overcome anything.

Anything. Nothing in your life is beyond the grace of God. Jeff, what is grace? Grace is the powerful favor of God in overcoming sin to bring you to Himself.

It is the constant favor of God on your life, undeserving as you and I are. It is God's special favor on His people.

[7 : 52] The kind of grace I'm talking about now is saving grace. The grace that brings us to heaven. Now, we see the truth of this life not being beyond the grace of God.

Nothing in this life being beyond the grace of God. We see all of this evidence in God's victory over your greatest spiritual enemy. It's not Satan.

Your greatest spiritual enemy is your own unbelief. Alright? If you were to stand before the Lord to give an account of the life you live here now, you would not be able to blame Satan for your life and your choices.

As if that would get you out of going to hell. Well, it was the devil's fault. The Lord will say there were many instances where the devil tempted you and owned you in this situation.

What would send you to a devil's hell? What is it that you would be ultimately judged by that would merit you a devil's hell for all eternity into outer darkness and separated from God forever?

[9 : 12] There's only one answer. Unbelief. That is your greatest enemy. That is the enemy that God has most overcome to bring you to Himself.

And it is the constant enemy of your walk with Jesus. Unbelief will never leave you alone. Once you're saved, once you're born again in Christ, you're not finished with unbelief.

Every single time you sin, you sin from the root of unbelief. In that moment and in that situation. Or you wouldn't sin.

If you were believing faithfully in that moment, and you were making it about Jesus in that moment, you wouldn't sin. You and I sin because of an ongoing battle with unbelief.

Now, God has conquered unbelief in the sense that He has brought you from rebellious unbelief into faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, so that you could be born again and released from,

forgiven for your sins.

[10:21] So the ultimate aspect of unbelief has been conquered in your life by the Lord Jesus. It took Jesus dying on the cross to do that for you. But now, do you keep sinning?

Did you sin at all this past week? Alright, you're going to do some more this week. We're not proud of that. One of the reasons you're sitting here is you want to be encouraged to continue in your striving against sin and for holiness.

But unbelief will be your constant battle until you go to be with Jesus in heaven. So unbelief nags at us throughout our lifetime.

But to follow Jesus means this. It means that we trust Jesus and draw on His wisdom and strength for every situation and trial of life.

So this passage that we're in today highlights our need for God's grace every day in every way. Now I'm going to go ahead and caveat one other thing before we dive into the passage and it's this. As I thought about offering this to you this morning and what it would mean for us in this new year, each of us have come into this room this morning with the need to deal with some aspect of sin in our life.

[11:39] There's something. Now listen, not all of us in this room are struggling with pornography. Not all of us in this room have committed adultery against our spouse last week.

Not all of us are drunks and secretly getting drunk and not telling anybody. Not all of us are secretly finding somewhere to take a needle and shoot illicit stuff into our veins or sniff stuff or smoke stuff or whatever.

We tend to think of those kinds of things as the sins that other people need to get right in their life. But what about the kinds of sins that you and I face every day of our lives that are nevertheless sin? They're still sin. Let's talk about a few of them real quickly before I dive in. Has anybody this past week shown any degree of impatience with other people out of pride in your life?

Something didn't go your way and so you were impatient and irritable and I can tell you that is a basis in pride. That's you saying this isn't right, this isn't fair, I don't like it, I wouldn't write it this way, therefore this is wrong.

[12:59] Well, maybe you were wronged, but maybe in being wronged, you sinned by wrong back. You responded in wrong. Do you see what I'm doing here?

Did you gossip? Did you find yourself saying something about someone else that whether or not you said it to their face, you knew as you said it, I shouldn't be saying these kinds of things about this person or people to these other people.

This is not right. Were you impatient? Were you irritable? Were you prideful? Did you gossip? What kind of thoughts did you have in your life?

Did you believe the best about other people? Did you give them the benefit of the doubt? Did you withhold kindness? Did you withhold gentleness when you could have given it very freely and openly, but it took you to get past you to be able to do it?

Were you just too busy to say something meaningful and kind and helpful? Were you so locked into yourself that you couldn't get past yourself to think about what somebody else needed in a given moment and the moment passed you by?

[14:15] These are the kinds of things. What is it in your life that you'd like to say right now, I would like 2026 to be different in how I deal with this issue in my life.

This is something that I've long since needed to deal with. I've made half-hearted efforts to stab at it, but I need to get this right. Maybe it's some aspect of worship in your life in the Lord.

Maybe it's a good thing that you need to bring into your life that you have not committed to. It may not be something necessarily you're doing wrong.

It may be something you need to be doing as part of your walk with Jesus and your commitment to Him, but you've never really taken it seriously as a responsibility in that walk.

And maybe that's something you need to deal with. What is it? What is it that you need to say, I want to take this thing and I want to see God deal with this in my life this year so that by this time next year, I will have made great gains in my life against this sin, against this issue of neglect, apathy, whatever it is spiritually in your life.

[15:30] That's what this message, I hope, will help you do and commit to. That's what I'm hoping will be the applicational aspect of what I'm sharing with you this morning. What do I need to work on?

What is your spiritual plan to do it? I need to deal with this and I know it because it's affecting the way that I walk with Jesus.

It's affecting the way that I minister to other people. Alright? Now let's see what this passage will unveil for us.

The first item that I'd like to deal with as we take this apart in the way of this exposition is this. Our unbelief is our undoing. And we're going to talk about unbelief as it's exposed by the Lord Jesus in the characters of this particular situation.

Whenever you're reading in the Bible and you come to these characters that are being brought out you're seeing things happen in their life. Characters are speaking or doing or whatever.

[16:35] Take note of how each of those characters are living or acting or speaking in relationship to God or in this instance to Jesus Himself.

Take note of the relational aspects that are being shown to you in this. These characters are not here just to fill out the drama. These are real people.

And this interaction is what we need to see. What are they saying? What are they doing? What does it say about their relationship to God? Particularly now with the theme of unbelief.

And so one of the first things that we see here in our text is this. When they came back to the disciples they saw a large crowd around them and some scribes arguing with them.

So already we have people introduced. We have them. We have the disciples. We have a large crowd. And we have some scribes. Alright. Who are they?

[17:36] They. Go back to the antecedent for this. They. Back up into verse 2. Six days later Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves and he was transfigured before them.

Now personally we are already told earlier in chapter 8 I think it is right around verse 27 or so 28 that Jesus is in an area known as Caesarea Philippi.

Caesarea Philippi in the way of the country of Israel is way up in the northern part. Today it would be around the Golan Heights and at the foot of Mount Hermon.

That's where Caesarea Philippi is. That's the area that Jesus so that's even beyond the Sea of Galilee north of that. He's gone way way up into the upper regions of Israel.

And he's ministering in this area and I think he's probably taken the disciples somewhere into the area then of Mount Hermon this mountain. And this is where Jesus is transfigured.

[18:45] We know this as the transfiguration. And he has three of the disciples three of the twelve with him. Peter, James, and John. We come down to verse 14 and they Jesus and those three disciples came back to the remainder of the disciples and they saw a large crowd of people around the disciples and then they saw these religious leaders arguing with the disciples and immediately when the entire crowd saw Jesus they were amazed and began to run up to greet him and he asked them what are you discussing among yourselves?

Now let's deal with these people as we see them and what we're going to see in the unbelief here being exposed is the different ways unbelief is seen in our relationship with God.

And so we want to ask ourselves how might my life be reflected in some ways in what the scribes are saying what the crowd is saying what the disciples are dealing with and even what this father is dealing with how does unbelief maybe manifest in my life in ways similar to each of these?

See? And so the first group of people become the scribes and here's what we can say about them the scribes are self-righteous in their unbelief. This is self-righteous unbelief.

This is thinking way too highly of ourselves and putting way way way too much emphasis on our own ability to discern the situation estimate the situation evaluate the circumstances and what they're saying here is this your failure your failure is evidence of what we've said all along about you and your disciples you and your rabbi are upstarts and glory seekers you're just frauds you're just frauds this is just trickery and they're saying this out of their own self-righteousness they've elevated themselves above Jesus and the disciples and so they look down on them with this very very self-righteous condescension then we have the crowd they're self-absorbed in their unbelief we want to see the show so wow us and this is what Jesus is to so many different people who name him he's a genie in a bottle kind of thing wow us I need to see you help this person so that you can help me too so you become the guinea pig

[21:10] I'm the stand buyer and you're the guinea pig and I'll wait and see if it works for you before I wait in these people are always on the periphery watching ministry happen but not giving themselves for ministry they're not the people who are willing to wait in and get messy and get it on

them they watch and they let it happen to you and if it works for you they may slide in and get a little bit of the the leavings you see yourself in this how about the disciples themselves how about self-reliant unbelief we've done this before so we can handle it if you go back to chapter 6 verse 13 you see the evidence of what I'm saying to you here Jesus sends the twelve out in his name is an experiment a training exercise to give them an ability to go out and do what Jesus will commission them to do after he is crucified and raised again and goes to be with the father and so in verse 13 of this section in chapter 6 we see what is said and they were casting out the disciples were casting out many demons you see that and were anointing with oil many sick people and they were being healed so we have the disciples doing much in the way of what

Jesus they see him doing they're casting out demons they're healing sick people with diseases and so I think they kind of took a hey we've been down this road before we got this do you do that you get to a certain I got this you may not say that out loud but you live it that's self reliance very easy to slip into that and then we have this father and I'm going to label this self defeating unbelief this is an I'm not sure that even Jesus can really help my son I'm not sure so we see some weak faith here we see some self defeating self talk in this I've tried the God thing and it didn't work or I've done the God thing and it just doesn't seem to be filling the bill or living up to its reputation the guy here the father has his eyes on the enormity of the problem and boy when you read the account of what he's had to deal with we can't judge him can we this is pretty serious stuff now you you people have children

Solomon what would it be like for you to see Lewis going through something like this wouldn't it rip your heart out oh it would terrify you bro it would terrify me for Derek for you to see one of your kids in this condition to see Caden like this would just rip your heart out and everything about you as a mom and a dad would want to do something for this child so you see a sense of desperation here don't you but it's a desperation born from fear not faith did you hear me it is a desperation not born of faith born of fear bad place to be you might start there but you don't want to stay there thank God Jesus will bring you from fear to faith it's what he does amen yes and this is what we want to see Jesus doing in the life of these people this guy has suffered the shame he has suffered the heartache of his only son's condition for years and years without any improvement without any relief nothing they've tried his work and after seeing the disciples of

Jesus fail the man now doubts whether their teacher can help if they can't do it their teacher probably can't do it either so as we move through the passage I want you to consider how your own life can express itself in one or more of these categories of what we will call unbelief unbelief especially when you're faced with the difficulties of life for example have you ever been guilty of self righteousness during some difficulty in your life how about finding yourself being self absorbed or self reliant or problem focused to the point where you can get down the road a little bit and you realize wow for some time now I need to ask myself what does Jesus have to do with any of this because I haven't really been thinking at all about the Lord I just been so!

problem! Hey you struggle with that see this is endemic to being a human being maybe you didn't respond in faith to the Lord you didn't respond in humility and selflessness to God or others no you believed you spoke and you behaved as if you doubted and disbelieved Jesus now again I am not casting dispersions or doubt or judgment on your salvation I am not up here saying you should rethink whether you're saved or not I'm saying no saved people live with a battling of unbelief we live with that and unbelief can manifest in different ways in our life given certain circumstances situations and seasons we go through we need to help each other with this alright another thing another thing I want to talk to you about in terms of this unbelief being exposed is unbelief now being expressed I want you to notice how

[26 : 46] Jesus brings these people all to the point of seeing how serious the situation is on a spiritual level and how deep their unbelief goes left to themselves they wouldn't be able to do!

but with Jesus they can for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see Jesus would show them the truth of their unbelief and that is the process you're about to see unfold before you this is the grace of God this is the goodness of Jesus bringing undeserving people through a process to be able to see and evaluate the truth of their own heart in relationship to God in a difficult moment!

God is using this so he begins the process if you'll notice with a question it's in verse 16 and Jesus asked them what are you discussing with them now why did Jesus ask this question why does he begin this process of revealing their hearts to them why does he do this with a question alright did he already know the answer Jesus already knew the answer how did he know the answer because

Jesus is the searcher and knower of hearts before any word ever leaves your lips Jesus knows what you will say because Jesus knows what emanates from your heart he knows your heart and the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart Jesus knows what's in your heart he knows what's coming out before you ever do!

so yeah Jesus knew the deal he is getting the people to answer what they believe we are getting this beyond what they think they want to say to what they really believe in their own hearts about what's going on so what Jesus is doing here is he pulling out of them what they know what they believe he is having them confess their hearts and he doing it in a wise!

gentle ways just asking questions and then he is listening and if he can get the people talking long enough the truth will come out the truth will come out alright now look this is a spiritual principle that God will work time again in your life and here is the principle suffering for the sake of sanctification remember we use the word sanctification to mean Christ likeness God growing you in holiness to Jesus conforming your character to that of Jesus so that all that you think say and do begins to express more and more the character of your Lord and Savior suffering for the sake of sanctification God will purpose and guide notice I did not use the word allow!

[29 : 45] He does more than just allow He purposes! guides you through difficult and even hear me now exhausting trials to expose your own heart to you the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick who can understand it Jeremiah 17 9 if you go to verse 10 it says to you that God is the searcher of hearts and so God does this work because your heart is so deceitful and you're so prone to self deception as well as satanic deception it takes the power and truth of God to search these things out and reveal them to you in ways that are more objective!

and true we have to! past the reality of what Jeremiah tells us here so God will expose he will expose your weaknesses to you through trials he will drive foolishness and selfishness and pride out of you as he teaches you to respond to himself in faith with everything that happens to you and he will do this over and over and over again because he loves you beloved not because he's punishing you now you may feel the weight you may feel the burden of the consequences of your sin if you choose to sin in a certain way and you repeat that sin and you refuse to deal with it you're going to suffer the consequences of that sin in your walk and God is going to discipline you because he loves you he disciplines!

the son whom he loves! Hebrews right? this is what we can expect but not punishment God does not punish his people Jesus took our punishment on himself now it's about you growing in holiness so when the Lord spiritually squeezes you what comes out what comes out when the Lord uses trials and circumstances in life to take you out of your comfort zones and into challenging uncomfortable situations what comes out of your heart via your mouth and actions towards your children towards your husband towards your wife toward people people who don't even have anything to do with what happened to you do you take it out on them man there's all kinds of ways this manifests now what the Lord is doing is giving you a spirit in this trial stuff that I'm talking he's giving you a spiritual window into the measure or maturity of your faith in him he's helping you to see where you are in your faith walk with him in that circumstance maybe you were walking with the Lord somewhere up here and then this thing hit you and all of a sudden you took a nosedive you and there could be so many reasons you become so problem centered and so focused on working the problem that you really do get to the place where it's like what does Jesus have to do with any of this that's not good he's going to help you measure that he's going to help you see what you need to do and so I want to give you a different word you know we have these words that we use around January when we start talking what's the word that we all use that we want to it begins with an R okay let me give you a better R word repentance you need to make like I do this new year about repentance not resolutions repentance because there are different parts of repentance that are not necessarily included in resolutions repentance has everything to do with your attitude toward the

Lord in your walk with Jesus resolutions can be about anything concerning any goal or aspect in repentance your one goal is always to please Jesus in all things that's what repentance is all about you're not repenting just to get your act together you're repenting so that you can honor Christ because in some way without repentance you're not honoring the Lord that's why you need to repent of it because at its root it doesn't please Christ it defames the name of Jesus even if it's some private thing that you just hold within your heart that's going to come tell on you later folks I'm going to say that in just a minute I'm going to show you how that works and so Jesus will give you

this opportunity as you follow him to get beyond you did you hear me now and that will come through faith in him and that that's what we see

[34 : 45] Jesus doing next with these groups of people if you look with me at verse 19 19 the man gives Jesus this incredible explanation of what happens in answer to Jesus question what are you discussing this man steps forward and tells him here's the deal here's what I'm facing and in verse 19 and Jesus answered them and said oh unbelieving generation how long shall I be with you how long shall I put up with you bring him to me bring him to me now I don't want to say that like Jesus himself was or in some way irritated by all of this there's a very different thing happening in Jesus heart here and we see that in the text Jesus identifies the exact nature of the problem within each of these people and it's in this statement oh faithless generation faithless can also be unbelieving as in the new

American standard translation and now I don't want to skip over this little word oh your Bible should have it because it's there oh Jesus uses this to express and show his deep emotion in this cry from his heart I'm so thankful the Bible does this that the biblical writers didn't skip this kind of detail under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he is deeply pained by the lack of faith and trust shown by the disciples in this particular situation beloved Jesus deeply cares about what is happening here not just about the boy the young man not just about the dad but the entire issue of unbelief that he's seeing in his disciples the dad the crowd everybody oh and it's just hard for him his spiritual caring and concern are contrasted very sharply with the cold indifference of the scribes the self absorption of the crowd and the disciples and so out of this context of concern and this contrast with Jesus compassion and the coldness of these people out of all of that he wearily and very candidly asks how much longer he's going to see such a lack of love and faith and have to deal with it he's just longing for the time when he will complete his work to overcome the sinful weaknesses in human beings himself being human but not with sin without any sin in his life this is a very compassionate response Jesus is grieved in his heart about what he's encountering with these people he knows the pain he knows where it's coming from he knows the deeper issue it pains Jesus to see such a surface response to such a deep spiritual reality and this is just how we live we live with such pettiness do we not such we are such petty people anybody else but Jesus would have burned us to a crisp long ago but not Jesus God loves us so much that he would send Jesus to die for us when we were at our worst wow the sweet thing about all of this is that he will complete his work to overcome all this Jesus Jesus asks another question he doesn't leave him here he doesn't leave him here notice verse 21 then Jesus asked the father how long has this been happening to your son and then the father asked now this is being asked to further clarify just how hopeless and desperate the situation seems to be now folks please I don't want to put too fine a point on this but I feel like I need to tell you this this corresponds precisely with the way that Jesus will sometimes deal with us in our lives he continues to allow us to live in the! consequences of our rebellion or the consequences of our momentary lapse or our unbelief or whatever it is in our life that's keeping us in this realm of kind of doing it our way he will keep us in that and he will continue to bring us to that point like he's using this question to do here to further clarify for our own hearts how hopeless and desperate it is for us to stay in that vein to continue in that way isn't it crazy how we run to stuff that we know doesn't work and we go right back to it again and play in the mud and what do we get in the way of results the same thing and then what do we do complain and gripe and mope and go into self pity all of that's pride every bit of it it's all pride we're not getting what we want when we want it the way we want it right come on

[40 : 39] I'm reading your mail because I'm one of you I'm with you I understand this too well this question is helping to further clarify the issue just like Jesus will work in your life to help you clarify the issue he'll let you go and run off only so long as it really helps you see now do you get the point you really don't want to go there again do you you don't please no alright that kind of thing now here's what's happening Jesus is reading their hearts and he is giving expression to what they are all thinking in light of these details what are they thinking this sounds impossible that's why Jesus did this what are you guys talking about now I already know what you're talking about but go ahead and let's get this out in the open alright dad how long has this been going on oh and he gives him all the details

Jesus already knew all of that why! is he doing! he wants to hear what's going on everybody everybody's real cued in to okay this is the issue alright we're all good this is kind of where Jesus is with this here's the deal if Jesus is who he says he is and if they truly believe that he is God's son

this situation shouldn't cause them to doubt but if they doubt and if they're still defining Jesus in terms of what they want Jesus to be as their God their king or whatever if they're defining Jesus in their terms then their faith is either absent or misplaced and they need to know that don't they and that's what he'll do Jesus will show you that faith is either absent so you're!

your faith in something that doesn't exist for your salvation and that's a bad place to be don't you want to know that you'd be surprised how many people don't we get to this point in my ministry with them and they like shut it down no no no no that's too scary you mean you don't want to know if you're really in the Lord or!

you would rather live in this false notion you would be surprised folks then there's this other instance of maybe their faith is being misrepresented misplaced they have saving faith but in this particular situation they've seen that slippage you know and they need God to come in and intervene and that's what he does let me bear your burden with you let let let the people that I've brought around you help bear that burden with you and let's ratchet this thing up a little bit in the way of what you're doing let's get you to a better place in how you're responding to me how you're walking with me because that's going to be the key to all of this and this is how our Lord is he is just so brilliant so rich and wonderful He truly is give him all the credit

Jesus is using the situation of this father and his demon possessed son to expose and express the unbelief of everybody so when his dad says now notice this I'm going to put this up on the screen here when when the dad says if you can do anything have compassion on us and help us see you hear doubt in that yeah sure but do you hear some desperation that also says I sure hope you can yeah in verse 22 what he's doing he's expressing!

[44 : 38] what we all experience in our walk with the Lord because why we have weak faith we struggle to trust believe to make each moment about glorifying God boy when that thing heats up we get so problem focused it can get to the point where it's really not about glorifying God anymore I just need to get out of this I just want out well look folks this is one of the most important things I'm going say to you believe it or not today listen Jesus doesn't pass this off as well bless their hearts you mean well but it's just hard I get it so go ahead and act like an unbeliever I get it bless your heart our lack of faith deeply grieves the Lord have you seen these commercials he gets you have you seen this the commercials are outlined from this particular denomination to express he gets you and it's okay as if it's okay for you to stay where you are and be who you are when the Bible teaches us no it's not he meets you where you are to bring you where you need to be and that's a very different message from that commercial Jesus gets you oh brother gag me with a pitch fork that kind of stuff that kind of stuff is the stuff that people see and get sappy and sentimental about their walk with God and now their whole life with Jesus is built on feelings and so when the feelings start to get where they're in the way that they want that's all they have because it's not about Jesus that statements about us not about the Lord and so this dad is expressing some of that in his own life again our lack of faith deeply grieves the Lord now Jesus his answer to this father is his answer to all of us who face the reality of our weakness and our human frailty we don't need to lie to the Lord about what's really going on in our heart because he knows we need to be raw and real about that we just need to understand that God doesn't want to leave us there he wants to bring us through that and beyond so that we can continue to be conformed to his image and so Jesus Jesus answered to the father is the same answer we all can all things are possible to him who believes now here's the question because this is grossly misinterpreted by a couple of denominations who use this so just give me a second here what does Jesus mean if you can all things are possible to him who believes well we're faced with two basic!

lines of interpretation so one one are we to understand this as Jesus pointing these people to themselves or two Jesus is pointing them to himself now I know the safer place but is that contextually true see I know what I want it to say but what does it say that's where we have to camp out in other words are we to believe that Jesus is teaching these self seeking misguided people that if they can believe it they can do it name it and claim it baby is that what we're dealing with here because this is what several denominations use this teaching to mean is is Jesus teaching us about the power of positivity is Jesus teaching us about the power of positivity by telling us listen to tap into our vast human potential and exercise our secret power of positive thinking after all Jesus said if you have the faith of a mustard seed you will move mountains and taking stuff out of context like that here's another one if you can dream it you can do it after all Jesus said all things

are possible to him who believes I believe I believe Jesus wants me to have half a million dollars by the end of the month I believe he repeats part of the father's request look at this if you can if you can now the answers to all of this all of it come in verse 23 and Jesus said to him if you can all things are possible to him who believes well if that's true then we need to understand what he's telling them in the way of this answer so I'm going to put it up here on the screen if you can if you can

[50 : 02] I want you to about those three words if you were doing your little Bible study here and you were trying to better understand what Jesus means by this answer because your heart is going to tell you he is not telling them that the answer is within them right all right so where is the answer then all right if you can what's one of the first things you notice about the emphasis!

it's capitalized and there's a good reason for that you refers to Jesus so Jesus answers emphatically if you can what's he saying in other words I can because of who I am I can nothing is impossible for me all who believe in me will find that is true so the emphasis is that we should believe on the one who can the one in whom nothing is impossible he's not pointing them to themselves he's not giving them some kind of formula that puts God in a corner and obligates God to do what we want because we believe it that's not at all what!

this is about here's what I'd of a pastoral challenge for this year and I'm not kidding now I'm offering this as a sober minded reality let's remind each other this year of two words let's start it off together let's adopt it let's agree to say this to each other when we gather whether it's for coffee or here or whatever it is and here it is it's just two simple words Jesus can Jesus can and let those two words be a clarion call to faith to faith Jesus can it doesn't mean that we put Jesus in a box and he has to do everything that we say because we believe he can it's a way of saying I need to get myself in line with what he wants for me Jesus can Jesus will Jesus does all according to his purposes isn't that what

Isaiah told us I will accomplish my purposes I will see my designs done and that's what we want let me ask you now do you want your plan for 2026 or do you want Jesus plan for you for 2026 be careful how you answer because if you answer Jesus you need to expect some train wreck suffering to come your way because you're swimming upstream folks you're swimming against the current it's not all going to be roses and ice cream I see my brother looking at me and going yep now this is not a message of doom this is a message of reality for what we're trying to talk about we want to understand Jesus can now this says that Jesus is pointing them all to himself he's challenging!

the father and everyone else in terms of their understanding of who Jesus is the problem in this situation is not with Jesus ability it's not with the disciples ability or inability it's with the spiritual unbelief and lack of dependence on God on the part of each of these groups of people now hear this unbelief short circuits spiritual fruit bearing it's why Satan tempts you with it because when we do not operate in faith we are not trusting in the goodness of God and we are not seeking what pleases him according to his will notice up on the screen what I say here the people in our passage are not looking at this situation and the needs involved in terms of spiritual realities!

[54 : 18] They're not the primary issue is spiritual everyone is missing that reality as they get all caught up in themselves and their agendas we look to Jesus and we see clearly how we should interpret and act in these given situations in our life so when you're faced with a situation that requires a strong response of faith what do you do what what's the answer to that what do you do!

verse 24 immediately the doubt and said I do believe help my unbelief what a prayer I believe Lord but I don't believe as I should help me in my weaknesses help me to believe more deeply more faithfully more truly help my belief to be grounded in you not the problem the circumstance!

the situation the doubt the fear the worry the anxiety the uncertainty I've had my eyes on myself I've had my eyes on my problems I've had my eyes on other people help me to look to you and believe you now that's the cry of a Christian that's the cry of repentance I want to share a quick quote with you before I move on God's concern in prayer is to shape a heart that trusts!

Him with everything isn't that good? So keep in mind as we pray this kind of prayer as we seek the Lord in these circumstances sure we would like the circumstances to change up a bit sure we would like some relief but if it's God's wisdom not to bring that to us can we pray that prayer understanding that God is desiring to shape a heart that trusts Him with everything even if the trial goes on and will shaping your heart to trust Him will that be enough to keep you faithful in it or do you have to have things change and go your way that's why I asked you a minute ago be careful how you answer do

you want to do your plan for 2026 or God's be careful of course I want you to answer God's Jesus undoes our unbelief here's how it all ends when

Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering what did he do he went ahead and rebuked the unclean! spirit!! you deaf and mute spirit now this is very interesting to this time they haven't had anything happening with the demon saying you know demons a lot of times are very vocal when they're in these people they scream and cry out and say these really bizarre things it's a terrifying proposition here it's you deaf and mute spirit I command you to come out of him and do not enter him again now notice what happens immediately in verse 20 after crying out ah now the demon comes to voice after crying out and throwing this boy this young man into terrible convulsions it comes out of him it obeys Jesus authority and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them thought he was dead but

[57 : 47] Jesus took him by the hand and raised him up and he got up and then when Jesus comes into the house his disciples begin and this is the first thing see I don't maybe I would have done this I don't know maybe I would have run up and said you know dude what in the world how come I couldn't do that and that's exactly how I would sound Jesus how come I couldn't do that who do you hear is at the center of that me let's fix this thing man I look so foolish I don't want to do that again next time I want it to work well Jesus his answer is very revealing this kind cannot come out by anything but prayer and I wonder if they understood how indicting that answer was on them you with me you see exactly what's good okay good when

I first studied this I was like hmm they didn't pray enough or what no that's it's more than that this is this is unbelief expelled the radiant splendor of Jesus when he was transfigured just before this that was all testimony to Jesus as the king of kings now why is that important because we see the authority of Jesus in overcoming the demon in this boy and that becomes even more proof of Jesus power over the spiritual forces that!

you should run to the king of kings that should be first response so what do you do when you find yourself beaten down by life circumstances your weak faith your conscience tormented by guilt the consequences from sin that you've done against yourself or those around you what do you do with all that do you turn again to the riches of God's grace in Jesus once again folks I put it up here on the screen Jesus can Jesus will Jesus does all according to his purposes for your life if Jesus wasn't your king you wouldn't have a reason to hope or to heal so you follow the king of kings you trust him to deal with your doubt your fear your guilt your weakness all the things that stand in the way of you trusting him pushing through unbelief to trust the Lord even when you don't know how it's going to turn out the disciples failed so miserably because of their weak faith and their own self reliance and a serious lack of faith in everyone present in the passage it wasn't greater than Jesus grace and his mercy to overcome the dad his son was both mercy and judgment so how is that possible well listen mercy for the father and anybody else who would believe on the name of Jesus and his authority over spiritual darkness yeah but judgment for the hard hearted scribes all the people who would join these scribes in continuing in unbelief and we come to the final explanation of this unbelief that I've read to you the disciples are apparently feeling the sting of their failure the conviction of Jesus words and actions are ringing in their ears so the lesson given to the dad was their lesson as well what is it well the question at the end of verse 28 rises mostly as I acted it out for you from their guilty consciences and their subdued pride this is just a lot of pride why couldn't we cast it out well

Jesus answers them and the answer is no different in meaning than his answer to the desperate dad it's just more penetrating because for Jesus it was like you guys should know better you should know better and yeah you should have been better prepared because I have put you down this road before and now you find yourselves here again and you couldn't do it and there's a good reason why that didn't happen and it's in the previous context if we've been going through this verse by verse it comes over and it's all it's all subsumed under what Peter said to Jesus if you go back to chapter 8 verse 32 and Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him but turning around and seeing his disciples Jesus then rebuked Peter get behind me Satan because you're not setting your mind on God's interest but man's there it is folks that sums it up

[62 : 44] Jesus is explaining to them what it's going to take to follow him what it's going to take to be his disciples what he's going to have to do for them and all sinners and Peter said yeah we're not having any of that that's not the plan we're going to go and Jesus rebukes him even on the mount of transfiguration Peter kind of blows it then we come to this situation and it all wraps up with Jesus

saying this kind cannot come out by anything but prayer what did he mean to tell them well the contextual clue that I'm going to leave you with answers all of this when the disciples ask him why they failed so ask yourself what is prayer what is prayer here it is on the screen it is the willful acknowledgement of our dependency on

God for what we need it is the expression of our trust in God to decide and provide what is best for us so it is our yielding ourselves to his will in humble faith if I summed it all up I'd say prayer is agreeing with God in our heart and if that agreement means that the trial will go on so be it because I'm praying for God's will to be done I'm agreeing with the Lord are you with me in that because here's what Jesus is telling them in this answer folks please don't miss this Jesus is telling them you did not depend on me and trust me and yield to me and that is why you could not help this person they wavered in other words under the deceptive pride of self sufficiency they doubted God's wisdom and way so they went their own way and acted heard the disciples had been doubting Jesus since he told them plainly that he would suffer be rejected die and he would rise from the dead they what no way all of them had been refusing to accept this as Jesus will as he offered it to them and so they came into this now hear this they came into this situation doubting the Lord and not depending on the Lord they already just prior to this and so that's how they came into this context their doubt and their lack of dependence was their undoing here's another way of saying this by emphasizing prayer Jesus is pointing them to their dependency and trust issue with him when this kind of thing happens in your life it's like the Lord is saying this I'm going to put it up here on the screen this was a time when your faith in me needed to be very deep and very strong and you were not prepared because you have been doubting me in other ways this is what happens you just had the scripture reveal to you why you find yourself repeatedly in these contexts of failure and sin something that grips your life something you struggled!

with something that you'd like to see in 2026 dealt with in here's why that doesn't happen because you develop a track record of these little doubts these little fears these little anxieties and they build up and then you come to a bigger moment and you're not prepared why would you trust him with something bigger when you're having trouble trusting him with something smaller are you with me I'm trying to describe human nature here as the Bible is showing us go back and deal with those doubts and those fears and those anxieties and those things that haunt you in other words this is why I say repent turn to Christ in repentance look to Jesus for his answer of what your repentance should look like in those particular ways it's the only way to deal with it it's the only way to come to terms!

If you don't they will compound would you raise your hand if you can testify to the fact if you don't deal with these things they will compound and grow on you and get yes yes you've got to deal with them and guys for those of us who are barely over 40 like me you need to know that Jesus will help you he doesn't abandon!

[67 : 39] you there's no there's no time limit there's no expiration it's not too late but today's the day you can't plead ignorance after hearing stuff like this I've just put it right in your face lovingly kindly but nevertheless there it is so what can we call this well we can say that this is a wake up call for you to confess repent and believe in him in all that he has said and done even though you don't understand everything about your need to deny yourself and take up your cross and follow him in your faith a few questions to end what is your greatest spiritual weapon now think it don't answer out loud just think about how you'd answer this what is your greatest spiritual weapon against personal sin now think about that how would you answer if somebody asked you that question answer love put into action by faith love put into action another way to say this if I reversed it this is faith this is faith in motion and that looks like love your faith put in motion in love and how does your faith grow and become stronger then through constant close communion with the

Lord all right next question how do you nurture close communion with the Lord through your personal and congregational communion with Jesus it's both and you cannot factor the church family out of this equation this is a family affair this is a family issue your sin affects everybody in this room even if we never know about it it affects everybody in this room because sin turns you into self not servant and everybody pays the price when you neglect your communion with the Lord through personal and congregational worship fellowship and prayer you are setting yourself up for spiritual failure in some soon to be crisis or trial in your life it's just a matter of time it's a ticking time bomb your greatest spiritual weapon against personal and corporate sin is the love of

Jesus and for Jesus which comes through faithful close communion with him so this is the last thing I'll say before we pray you need to remember who it is who undoes your unbelief and come to him often in humble prayer asking help my unbelief folks Jesus answer is all about humility it's all about us being in a posture of ongoing receptivity to God's will in our life no matter where it takes us or what it means for us we receive it with great gratitude with joy with a humble spirit and we walk in it and that gets us ready for the next thing and the next thing okay all right join me in prayer beloved! dear father in heaven as the people have remained attentive to listening to this occasion in the life of our lord and savior as he revealed the root issue and cause of so much in the way of our stumbling in our walk we would ask you to help us deal with the very personal ways that our unbelief shows itself in our life each one of us needs to take careful stock this week from this message about how unbelief wants to undermine our faith walk with you and our service to you even as your people and so God please help my brothers and sisters to do just that help them to be repentant in their submission to you help them to be humble and receptive and ready to receive from you this kind of direction from your word and then help them to understand in great wisdom practical ways to apply this to their lives so that each of us including myself including Pastor Greg as their shepherds we would all walk together and labor! in this spirit one another's burdens and seeing our church family grow in holiness to Jesus we thank you for Jesus Christ for his cross and for his beautiful gospel of grace and it's in his name that we pray Amen