

# 728 Help My Unbelief

## Phil Sanders

### God's Answers to Life's Questions

When the struggles of life come your way, don't you wish you had more faith to help you through them? Today we're asking the question, "How can we increase our faith?" And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:14-24) My friend, God can help.

Most of us can identify with the father of this boy who said, "I believe, help my unbelief!" We all need more faith to help us through our struggles. This father had patiently lived with his son's terrible affliction for several years and suffered right along with him. Who knows how many times that father had prayed, had rescued him from the fire and water, or had stood helplessly by watching his son in convulsion and foam at the mouth? Who knows how many times this father had prayed for his son, only to see the same affliction torment him again and again? It's no wonder the father said, "if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." But the father was looking at life through his own experience and could not see things as God sees them. Jesus responded, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." God does not have our limits. He is powerful and loving.

Why do we base our faith on God? Faith is only as good as the One who is trusted. You can trust God; He is utterly trustworthy. You can trust Him because of His character, His wisdom, His power, and His love. No one can do what God can do. First, trust Him *for His character*. Paul said, "But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one (2 Thess. 3:3). God never abandons His people but provides for them a way to live righteously. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." David said, "Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you" (Psalm 9:10).

Second, trust Him *for His wisdom*. You and I are limited in what we see and know, but God knows all and sees all. Psalm 147:5 says, "Great is our Lord, and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite." God can see the future; He sees things we can never see. Isaiah 46:9-10 says, "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.'"

Third, trust Him *for His power*. You and I are limited in strength and ability, but God can do all things. Mark 10:27 says, "all things are possible with God." We sometimes think our God is as small as our imaginations. Paul praised God in Ephesians 3:20-21, "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." We can trust in His power to do what we can not do.

Fourth, trust Him *because of His love for you*. God will always *do what is best for me* because He loves me. God will *be with me* through every storm, every drought, every hurt, every struggle, every trial, and every problem. We can take great comfort in Paul's affirmation, "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39).

A college girl once talked with her preacher and said, "I have never trusted anyone in my life. How can I trust the Lord Jesus Christ with my problems?" It was spring, and the girl was going home for a break. The preacher asked her how she was traveling. She said, "I am going to fly." "Do you have a ticket?" he asked. "No," she said, "I have to find out what time I can get a plane." "How are you going to do that?" he asked. "Well," she replied, "I am going to telephone the airline and find out what time the plane leaves and reserve a seat on that plane. Then my friend will take me to the airport and I'll board the plane." He said, "Do you know the reservation clerk at the airline?" "No, I don't." "Your friend is going to take you out to the airport, trusting the information of this unknown clerk?" "Yes, she will." "Do you know the pilot of the plane?" "No, I don't." "Then you are going to trust your friend to drive you to the airport. You're going to trust some unknown clerk at the airline office to arrange your seat on a flight. Then your going to take your seat in an airliner flown by a pilot you don't know, trusting him to get you home."

When you put your life, your soul and your problems in the hand of the Lord, you put yourself into the hand of someone who knows and loves you very much. You can trust the Lord Jesus, who died and rose again on your behalf. What will trusting God do for you? It will bring you peace of heart and hope. Faith is a conviction that certain facts are true. Faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). So, when a person trusts God there are some things he can confidently rely upon.

First, he *knows the whole world is not on his shoulders*. The faithful Christian realizes God is still in control in this world and is willing to help those whose hearts are completely His (2 Chron. 16:9). Peter invites us to cast all our cares, worries, and anxieties upon Him, "because He cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7). Second, the faithful Christian *knows that God sees and knows what he cannot see and know*. Solomon taught his son, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight" (Prov. 3:5-6).

Third, the faithful Christian *puts his soul into the hands of God*. The psalmist wrote, "Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever" (Psalm 125:1). Paul expressed great faith while he waited for his execution. He wrote to Timothy, his son in the faith, Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. For this reason

I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. (2 Tim. 1:8-12)

Increase your faith. Romans 10:17 says, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” The more you listen to God, the more you read the Bible, the greater your faith will be. And as you read your Bible, trust God to keep His promises. You’ll find that your struggles are not so different than others who have faced the same pressures. God stood by them through the struggle, and he’ll stay by you to help you through. Some people think the only way God can love is to prevent every sickness or problem. Genuine love realizes that we must face struggles to grow. God doesn’t remove every problem, but He does stand beside us and help us through every struggle. You can count on God’s help.

*Trust God to forgive your sins.* How do we know God will forgive our sins? He said He would! God does not lie. John said, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Part of the covenant God made with us and confirmed in the sacrifice of Jesus is to forgive sins (Matt. 26:28). The book of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah, saying, “For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more” (Hebrews 8:12). If God were not determined to forgive us, why would He have gone to such great lengths as to send His Son to die a cruel death? You can trust God to forgive every sin.

*Trust God to answer your prayers with what is best for you.* We do not have to beg God to hear our prayers. He invites us to pray. “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him” (Matt. 7:7-11)! God does not always do what we ask; but as a great Father, He always does what is best for us. We can have confidence in God’s care to see what we cannot see and know what we cannot know. Out of wisdom He will give us what we need.

*Trust God to help you through your struggles.* It is reassuring to know that we do not walk through life alone. God walks with us through the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:4). However fearful we are of the circumstances surrounding us when we are alone, we can have just such confidence when we are with Him. Peter invites you to cast “all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you” (1 Pet. 5:7).

Paul knew that the “sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom. 8:18). Like Jesus we can commit ourselves into God’s hands (Luke 23:46). A song says: Into Your hands, Father, into Your hands, I commit my spirit into Your hands. All I am and have I yield to You. Your love and grace will bear me through, For You know what’s best and what I should do, So I leave my soul within Your hands. Into Your hands, Father, into Your hands, I cast all my burdens into Your hands, All my stress and pain I give to You. Your love and grace will bear me through, For You know what’s best and what I should do, So I cast my cares into Your hands.

Solomon encouraged his son to “Buy truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding” (Prov. 23:23). Truth is ever valuable, for it alone holds the key to set us free from sin and error (John 8:31-32). God will tell us what we need to hear rather than what we want to hear. Out of love and wisdom, He tells us the things that light our path. Solomon said, “Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:3-6). Believe God’s promises. Jesus promised, “In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:2-3). God has a place reserved in heaven just for you. It is “an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away” (1 Pet. 1:3-5). When you grow in your faith, you will be able to say with Nahum: “The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him” (Nah. 1:7). You must trust Him if you are to please Him. The Hebrew writer said, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Heb. 11:6). Put your trust in God by your obedience to the gospel, by your prayer, and by your faithfulness to Him even in the toughest times. To obey the gospel, believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Son of God. Out of love, repent of your sins. Confess His name before others. Be baptized, that is, immersed in water so that your sins will be forgiven. Ananias asked Saul of Tarsus in Acts 22:16, “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.” I could ask you the same thing. What are you waiting for? Why not become a Christian today.

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