

I could list for you a whole catalog of sins that believing Christians practice. But none of these sins would come near to the sin that I want to talk about. This sin is the mother of all sins - the one that gives birth to all others. It is the sin of unbelief!

I am not speaking of the unbelief of a hardened sinner. The unbelief of reprobates, agnostics and atheists does not move God at all. No, **what angers God more than anything else is the unbelief and troubling doubts of those who call themselves by His name!**

Those who are His children - who say, "I am of Jesus" - and yet hold doubt, fear and unbelief in their hearts grieve Him more than all others!

How seriously does God take this sin of unbelief? Jude warned the church with these words: *"I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not"* (JUD 5).

Jude is reminding them of God's attitude toward unbelief! He is saying, "I am bringing to your remembrance God's utter hatred for unbelief among His saved people. "Having saved the people, afterward He destroyed them that believed not!"

Beloved, I believe God has called me today to put His church in remembrance of this same thing! *"Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come"* (1.COR 10:11). God may no longer destroy His people physically as He did in the Old

The Mother of all Sin

Testament. But His judgments on our unbelief today are spiritual - and they are just as severe!

Instead of being struck down, we die spiritually. Just look around today at the multitudes of doubting, struggling Christians who are dead spiritually. They are faltering, wavering, doubting, constantly fearing, never entering into the joy and peace of the Lord. They are no longer rooted and grounded - but instead are filled with unbelief and hardness of heart!

Unbelief is just as destructive today as it ever was. We may not turn into a pillar of salt - but we do become stiff-necked and bitter! The ground doesn't open up to swallow us - but we are swallowed by troubles, stress and family problems. Fire doesn't come down and consume us - but our spiritual life is destroyed!

No, we don't die physically - but something within us dies. Our love dies. Conviction dies. Conscience dies. Peace dies. Hope dies. All the things that make our walk with Jesus sweet die because of the sin of unbelief!

Because of our unbelief we fear all kinds of sins. The Puritans called these "bosom sins," those hidden

within. We're afraid we'll fall back into habits that once controlled us - lust, fornication, alcoholism, gambling, adultery.

Yet many of us are guilty of the mother of all sins - and we do not fear it. We do not take our unbelief seriously. We live as though God winks at it. And yet is **the one sin that opens our body and spirit to every other sin known to mankind!**

Let me give you four reasons why this sin of unbelief is so dangerous - and why God so despises it in His people:

Our Unbelief Makes God a Liar!

"He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." (1 John 5:10)

Consider all the ugly sins listed against Israel in the wilderness: murmuring, complaining, idolatry, unthankfulness, rebellion, sensuality. Yet none of these provoked God's wrath. It was their unbelief that angered God!

"And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe

me, for all the signs which I have [showed] among them?" (NUM 14:11).

God said to Moses, "These people make a lie out of everything I've done for them! I've performed miracle after miracle - I've delivered them time after time. When will they ever trust and rest in Me?"

Stop for a moment and think about all the things God has done for you: He has kept you. He has answered this prayer, that prayer. He has met you in a crisis here, a crisis there. He has brought you through trials, fed you with manna from heaven, done things for you that are nothing short of miraculous.

Yet now, as you face yet another crisis, do you still not trust Him to see you through? Perhaps you think, "But this time it's worse. I've never been in anything like this!" Oh yes, you have! Every crisis you've been in has required His miraculous provision - and He has delivered you time after time!

Each time He delivers you, He hopes that in the next crisis you'll be relaxed and ready, praying, "Father, I turn this over to You. I'm not going to fret or worry because you've delivered me every time. And I know you'll deliver me now!"

For thirty-eight long years Israel forgot God's Word and dismissed out of mind His miracles. And because they fell back so often into murmuring and unbelief, God said, *"I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them"* (verse 12). He told Moses, "I'm giving up on My people - because they never will come to the place where they trust Me!"

When Israel was on the victorious side of Jordan, Moses made a solemn declaration. He said: *"Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it... fear not, neither be discouraged.... Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The Lord your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you..."*

"Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God... And the Lord heard the voice of your words, and was wrath, and sware, saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good

land, which I swear to give unto your fathers..." (DEUT 1:21, 29-30, 32, 34-35).

Beloved, God magnifies His Word above His name. He means every word He says. And all of these things God told Israel are the same things He has told us. I ask you - **will we not also incur His wrath if we act in unbelief?**

Paul wrote: *"... God, (who) cannot lie, promised [life eternal] before the world began"* (TIT 1:2). And the author of Hebrews wrote: *"... it (is) impossible for God to lie, [so that] we might have a strong consolation..."* (HEB 6:18).

Today God says to us clearly, "I can and I will." Yet how do we respond to His Word? We immediately question Him! "Can God do it? Will He do it?"

We read His Word and hear all His promises from the pulpit. But then we go to our corner and fret because we don't see Him immediately doing what we think He should do for us. We are loaded with doubt and unbelief!

When we do not let His Word anchor our souls - when we hear great and precious promises, then act as if we've been abandoned - we make God out to be a liar!

2. Our Unbelief Today Is Worse - Because It Is in The Face of Even Greater Promises!

"...he [Christ] is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." (HEB 8:6)

Under the Old Covenant, all the Israelites had was the promise that God would bless them if they obeyed. **Today, under the New Covenant, we have a "better promise": He gives us strength enabling us to obey!**

This "better promise" means we all shall know Him. We don't just have a high priest who goes into God's presence for us. No - a veil was rent in two so we could all come into the presence of God!

Consider all the Lord has promised us:

His law is written in our hearts. His Holy Spirit abiding in us. Christ Himself with us always.

Reconciliation with God. Healing, mercy and forgiveness through simple repentance and faith.

The power and authority to ask anything in Jesus' name. Power over sin. Power over Satan. No weapon able to prosper against us.

Access to the Father. A throne to run to in the hour of need. Deliverance from overwhelming temptations. Continual manifestations of the presence of Jesus.

Rest by simply asking and trusting. Peace beyond all human understanding. Freedom from fear all the days of our life. Abundant life.

He's promised it all to us!

Yet still so many Christians live in fear, doubt, confusion - always fretting. They don't believe Him or appropriate His precious Word. They act as though He never made such promises!

The truth is, we have much less reason to doubt and fear than our forefathers did. Our enemies today aren't the Hittites and Jebusites - they are stress, fiery temptations of the flesh, weariness of body and mind, a violent and complex society, new and subtle evils that no other generation has faced. Yet God has promised us that where sin abounds - no matter how subtle or powerful it is - we have more grace to do battle with it than any other generation in history!

Paul said of the Jews: *"...because of unbelief they were broken off..."* (ROM 11:20). And he warns us today:

"Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (verses 20-22).

Hebrews also warns us: *"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God"* (HEB 3:12)

It doesn't matter how holy or righteous you think you are. If you do not have faith in the living Word

- abiding in it, assimilating it, making it a part of your life - then you are in danger of departing from God!

Search the Bible and see - there is not one example of God sparing unbelief! He judged it in every one of His children, in every generation.

Start with Eve, who doubted the truth of God's commandment in the Garden. Then go to the nobleman who was trampled to death for not believing God's word that starving Samaria would be flooded with food the next day. Go to Zacharias, John the Baptist's father, who was struck dumb for not believing God's word to him. Then go to this judgment in Jesus' day: *"And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief"* (MATT 13:58).

There has never been an instance when God excused unbelief - and He is not going to wink at it in these last days!

3. We Lose Much of What Is Preached to Us Because of Unbelief!

"... but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (HEB 4:2).

Do you ever wonder why the disciples were so ignorant of the ways of Christ and the eternal purposes of God? Why, after three years of sitting under the blessed preaching of the Savior of the world, they remained blind, unprepared for the things to come? I've constantly puzzled over this. Why was their understanding of the Cross and the Resurrection so limited?

It was because they did not hear with faith! On several occasions Jesus had to rebuke them: *"O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken"* (LK 24:25).

"Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" (MATT 8:26). They had little faith - hearts that were slow to believe His Word! And they were left empty, unprepared, confused - blinded by unbelief!

If Jesus "marveled" at the unbelief during His time on earth, what must He think of ours? Nineveh repented

after only one sermon, believing every word Jonah preached. Yet America has heard thousands of such warnings from many true prophets - but multitudes of so-called Spirit filled believers do not heed them! They say, "I don't want to hear that anymore." They put it all out of mind!

Times Square Church has been in existence for six years now, and our congregation is full of well-fed believers. If over that period people came to just one of our services held each week, that means they've heard more than 300 messages. Yet I sometimes wonder: How much of what they've heard has been remembered and worked into their spiritual fiber?

If God's Word is not assimilated by faith - if we do not ask Him in faith to help us receive and use it - we will end up picking and choosing only what we like. And we usually pick the blessings, mercies and comforts - and shake off the demands, reproofs and warnings!

It is trust that makes God's Word work into our spirit. Faith stamps it into our personality and mind so that it is never forgotten!

4. Unbelief Shuts Off All Intimacy With God!

We preach much at our church about intimacy in prayer and spending quality time with the Lord. But you can pray twelve hours a day, weep and cry, groan in deep intercession; you can intercede for needs all over the world; you can walk all over the house, telling Jesus how much you love Him - yet it all can be profitless, pointless, a total waste!

You may think, "Anybody who prays that long has got to have peace and joy. People will know she's been with Jesus. Surely something of God is taking place in her."

No! All the praying in the world will not do you any good unless you mix it with faith!

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (HEB 11:6).

You can fast and pray for three days or three weeks - but without faith, you will not please God! All your hours in prayer, all your petitions, all your "coming to Him" will profit you nothing unless your heart is anchored in faith!

"...let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (JAM 1:6-7).

If you're spending two hours with God and yet never believe Him to answer you - you're embarrassing Him for two hours! It may make you feel good or feel holy - but in reality you're wasting time! You're giving God two hours of nothing but unbelief and doubt. You might as well be shopping or fishing!

I know Christians who say they pray daily, often weeping before the Lord, yet nothing happens. They remain heavy-hearted, depressed. Their lives are always in turmoil. It is because they embarrassed the Lord by coming into His presence not fully persuaded He would do what He promised!

"Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (MK 11:24). *"and all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"* (MATT 21:22).

The children of Israel spent more than thirty-eight years alone with God. Can you imagine it? It must have been like having church every day! They had the ark in their midst, daily sacrifices, the cloud of fire, a preacher who talked with God face-to-face.

And yet God was angry with them - He slew every one of them! They all died in the wilderness with His wrath upon them. Why? Because they were full of unbelief and doubt!

Scripture says of them: *"And did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ"* (1.COR 10:3-4). Yet, in spite of all these blessings and provision, they had no faith! They spent a lifetime in a self-made hell of fear, despair and doubt!

I believe most of God's people today live as spiritual paupers. Many are no longer willing to exercise faith because something happened to make them question God's love. Perhaps a loved one died. Or an accident snuffed out the life of a wonderful Christian they knew. Or a sweet, tender child has a terminal illness, despite the fact his parents have given their all to God.

Many say, "I just don't understand that. How can I trust God when I don't understand why He would allow such a thing?" There is no human answer to their confusion. And like Zion, they claim, *"The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me"* (ISA 49:14).

But God knows the end from the beginning. And only when we are in heaven will we understand why some of these winds and waves have tossed us - and why God allowed it all.

Isaiah gave an answer - and I believe it is all we need to know for now:

"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that make thee waste shall go forth of thee" (verses 15-17).

I couldn't try to explain any of the many sufferings and trials in the body of Christ. But God has given us His Word: "You're My child - you're written in the palm of My hand. Trust Me!"

Let Me Speak to You About the Cure for Unbelief!

I searched my reference books and found entire lists of ways to "cure" unbelief. But none of these dozens of things touched me. So I asked God for something very simple - and He gave me two thoughts on how I can rid my heart of unbelief:

Lay hold upon every worry, fear and burden. Take them all to Jesus - and leave them on His shoulders!

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1.PET 5:7). Beloved, this is God's personal Word to you. It is His invitation, His request: "Put it all on Me! Don't carry it one hour longer. I care about everything that's happening to you. And I'm big enough to take it all for you!"

Someone called me not long ago who was in real stress and needing a word of encouragement. But I was too overwhelmed myself that day to help. I was stressed out by so many problems, I couldn't handle one more. So I answered, "I'm sorry - you'll have to call some other time. I'm too overloaded."

Thank God, He is never stressed out! He is never overloaded! His shoulders can carry the load of everyone of His children! And He urges us, "Lay it all on Me!" *"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved"* (PSA 55:22).

Go down your list right now: "God, I give you this, and this, and that. I give you this burden, this trouble, that relationship, that problem..." And be fully convinced - He cares!

Launch out in full faith on the written Word of God. Take up the Lord's challenge to live by His Word!

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (MATT 4:4). You've got to be able to say, "I'm going to live and die by God's Word to me!"

I ask you - how is it we can trust His Word for our eternal salvation, but not for our daily needs and problems? We can believe Him for the hardest part. Why is it harder for us to believe for help, guidance and power over sin?

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (JUD 24). God promised this to you - so let Him take on the burden of keeping you! Don't try to figure out how to do it. Just take Him at His Word. Simply pray: "Lord, You promised to keep me from falling - and I'm putting my eternal future on your promise. It is not my work now, but Yours!"

Go to the Lord and challenge His Word. Tell Him you are going to stake your life on it! **Lord, I'm going to live and die by what You told me. No matter how I feel or what I'm going through, I'm going to commit myself to Your promises to me!**

You will not live under guilt or condemnation any longer. You won't have to fret of worry or lie awake at night anymore. Instead, you will rest, because you're trusting in what He has promised you.

Show Him you trust His every word - and be blessed! Amen!

by David Wilkerson
December 6, 1993

Copyright © 1999, World Challenge, Inc., P.O. Box 260, Lindale, Texas 75771.

CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLIES INTERNATIONAL, P.O. BOX 888, COFFS HARBOUR NSW 2450, AUSTRALIA