

The Peril of Unbelief

Luke 1:18-25

We evangelicals make a big deal of certain sins - homosexuality, drunkenness, addiction, etc.... Yet, the two sins that God seems to emphasize in Scripture the most are *pride* and *unbelief*. It was for unbelief that Adam and Eve were expelled from their home. The Old Covenant people of God (Israel) wandered in the wilderness due to their unbelief. In fact, the Old Covenant ended because Israel hardened their hearts toward God and refused to believe Him about the Messiah. Zacharias receives God's message via miraculous means, yet he doesn't believe God. "**Because Zacharias did not believe**" he became a mute.

I. Even the most devout believer will sometimes struggle with unbelief.

Zacharias was a priest of Israel. He worshipped God in Spirit when almost all others around him were entirely given over to ceremonialism. Yet, when Gabriel told him that Elizabeth would bear for him a son, this faithful man said, "How will I know this *for certain*? The two words "for certain" are added by translators. Zacharias words are - "We will have a son? **How will I know (experience) this?**" He is saying, "Impossible! Even though God's message is clear, Zacharias' unbelief is getting in the way.

(A). Sometimes those raised in the church are the biggest unbelievers

435 years earlier this same angel Gabriel brought a message from the throne of God to Daniel, assuring him of the coming and redemptive accomplishments of the Lord Jesus Christ, who would be cut off as the sinners' Substitute, not for his own sins, but for His people (Dan. 9:26). Daniel believed God's word. Daniel, a *prisoner at Babylon*, without hesitancy believed God! Yet Zacharias, who virtually lived in the Temple, who had the entire Old Testament, with all the recorded miracles wrought by God, when that same angel spoke to him, turned to unbelief.

(B). God's messengers vary today, but the obligation on us remains to hear and believe Him.

The messenger in your life might be your pastor, or your parents, or your spiritual mentor. "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts to the voice of God" (Hebrews 3:12)

II. Unbelief causes certain things to transpire within our lives.

Sin has its consequences. The consequences are from destructive nature of sin and always affect us.

(A). There's no enjoyment of God's goodness for me, though there's no end to His goodness to me.

This is subtle, but it needs to be understood. The birth of John is described as "glad tidings" by Gabriel. Zacharias did not believe, and therefore He didn't participate in the joy of those tidings. Did his unbelief prevent John's birth? No. "*My words shall be fulfilled in their season*" (v. 20).

(B). There's no ability to encourage others in Him because myself am not encouraged by Him.

Every miracle and supernatural event in Scripture is for a spiritual and eternal lesson. When the Lord permitted Zacharias to become mute, it was a spiritual principle (in miracle form) for us. "You can teach no further than your experience." The best teachers are those who live it.

(C). The things of God, which should bring me refreshment, become stale and boring.

"*The people waited for Zacharias, and wondered why he stayed so long in the Temple*" (v. 21). Unbelief hides the glory of God from us (John 11:40) and the things of God are simply endured.

III. Unbelief has a direct and immediate effect on those I love and cherish

Because Zacharias could not enjoy for Himself the Word of God, could not encourage others through that same word, Elizabeth, upon discovering her pregnancy "*hid herself for five months*" (v. 24). Zacharias was the priest. He was the husband. Nothing had been shared or said by him. The people were incapable of hearing from him because of his unbelief. For that reason, Elizabeth was scared. Isaiah 7:9 "*If you will not believe, you will not be stable.*" Have you heard from Him? Believe Him.