

*“Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. 2 And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, “Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! 3 Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?” So they were offended at Him.*

*4 But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.” 5 Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.”*

### Dear Fellow Redeemed,

“Jesus marveled because of their unbelief.” Do you feel that way at times? You meet friends and neighbours, even family members and relatives who simply will not believe, in spite of all the evidence. This text gives us a valuable lesson on **The Power of Unbelief**. Jesus shows us

1. **It Blinds One to the Obvious.**
2. **It Builds on the Irrelevant.**
3. **It Blocks God’s Blessings.**
4. **It Breaks Before the Almighty.**

First of all we see from the people of Nazareth how

#### **-I- Unbelief Blinds One to the Obvious.**

The people were astonished at His preaching just like the People of Capernaum were. In Nazareth they said, “Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands!” Does this make sense? They were amazed at His teaching. Luke tells us that they all “marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” Luke 4:22 They also recognized that Jesus had performed many mighty works. They had no doubt heard about all the miracles He had performed around Galilee, healing every kind of illness and disease; casting out demons. He even healed a few sick people there in Nazareth. BUT they did not believe Him. Their unbelief blinded them to the obvious truth.

We see the same thing throughout His ministry. Nicodemus came to Jesus at night and told Him, “Rabbi, WE know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him.” John 3:2 He said WE know this. All the Pharisees, Priests and Scribes knew that He performed these miracles, yet all of them except Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea refused to believe. Their unbelief totally blinded them to the simple truth. In their unbelief they were more concerned about their worldly position than they were about their spiritual and eternal life with God.

The same is true today. The world we live in is so marvellous. The complexity and perfectness of design is mind boggling. It is obvious that there is a powerful, wise God who created all things. Yet people are blinded by their unbelief and refuse to acknowledge the obvious fact that there must be a Creator. They would rather believe the most ridiculous thing that all this magnificent world just happened by chance all by itself, rather than admit that there is a God that they are be accountable to God. The people of Nazareth wouldn’t even listen to God’s word. Luke tells us that Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah in chapter 61 which says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” When He sat down, He said, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” Jesus said He is the one that Isaiah was prophesying about. Jesus was doing exactly what Isaiah said the Messiah would do. They had seen prophecy fulfilled in His

preaching and miracles. Yet they would not believe. Their unbelief blinded them to the obvious truth right before them.

Today too, the Bible has been proven to be true and reliable over and over by history, by archeology, by hundreds of fulfilled prophecies, but people don't want to hear about it. Their unbelief still blinds them to the obvious truth.

### **-II- We also see in this account how Unbelief Builds on the Irrelevant.**

Why didn't the people want to believe in Jesus? They said, "Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" So they were offended at Him." What does that have to do with anything. Yes, it would be surprising when this home town boy suddenly showed up as the Messiah. But the fact that they knew Him and His family was totally irrelevant to whether or not Jesus was the Messiah.

We can understand their surprise. Jesus had grown up in their town. He made a living as a Carpenter in Nazareth for probably the last 15 years. He had only been gone for maybe a couple of months and now He comes back as an eloquent, wise preacher and miracle worker. That would be surprising, but that doesn't change the facts. The facts were still there that He was the greatest preacher they had ever heard, and He performed miracles that only God can do. They knew the Messiah had to be born into some family somewhere. Instead of feeling honoured that God chose their community to raise the Messiah, they were skeptical and resented Him and rejected Him.

A similar thing happened in Capernaum. A short time later Jesus fed the 5000. After that they wanted to make Him their king. They wanted someone who could keep providing all their physical needs. Jesus said to them, "You seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you." John 6:26-27 Jesus wanted to give them eternal life, but they were only interested in bread for their stomach. Everywhere Jesus went He preached a message of repentance for eternal life, but the majority of the people had no interest in repenting of their sins, or even acknowledging that they had any sins that needed to be forgiven. When He didn't give them what they wanted, they turned away and stopped following Him.

Mark mentions another sad condition of Unbelief. "Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them."

### **-III- Unbelief Blocks God's Blessings!**

The people of Nazareth didn't believe Jesus, therefore they did not receive any of the blessings that He has to give. Only a few people came to Him for healing. Worse yet, they didn't know the peace and joy of forgiveness and being reconciled to God the Father. Or of being able to call upon Jesus for every need. Worst of all, they would not receive their eternal salvation.

They not only rejected Him, Luke tells us they wanted to kill Him. "So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff." Jesus gave them one more simple proof that He was the Son of God and the promised Messiah. "Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way." Luke 4:28-30 This angry mob that drove Him out of the city to the edge of a cliff, now suddenly was powerless to touch Him. Jesus just walked right through the middle of them. Then He left and didn't come back.

This account is sad but it has a very practical value for us. Right after this, Jesus sent his 12 disciples out two by two to preach in all the villages and He gave them power to cast out evil spirits. Jesus told them, "In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!" Jesus wants them to know, not everyone is going to receive you or believe your message. Many will reject you. They aren't really rejecting you, they are rejecting Me. After seeing Jesus rejected in Nazareth, they shouldn't be surprised when it happens to them.

We can expect the same. Don't be surprised when people don't want to hear the truth, or that their unbelief persists even when you show them evidence of the truth. People will hold on to their unbelief in spite of all the evidence. So don't get disappointed when our efforts to witness to our Saviour are not successful.

Jesus even said that a prophet is not accepted "**among his own relatives, and in his own house.**" Jesus' own brothers didn't even believe in Him. That can happen to us too, that members of our own family do not have saving faith in Jesus Christ. It is tragic, but we should not be surprised by it. Unbelief is part of our nature. We are by nature enemies of God and opposed to God's word. So our human nature always fights against God. In fact, we all still struggle with unbelief. We deal with doubts, fears and weaknesses. There might be parts of Scripture that we have a hard time accepting. Like the Roman Catholics who read the names of Jesus' four brothers and hear of His sisters in our text, and yet they say that Mary remained a virgin all her life.

If we are left to ourselves, we are prone to deserting Jesus all together and returning to our unbelief. Therefore we should pray like the father who brought his demon possessed son to Jesus, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" Mark 9:24

The good news in all of this is that, as powerful as unbelief is,

#### **-IV- It Breaks Before the Almighty.**

God's Word is more powerful than unbelief and can crush it. On Pentecost and beyond, many of those who rejected Jesus in unbelief were brought to faith by the power of His word. We even read in Acts 6:7 "Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith." The Holy Spirit was working mightily to crush the unbelief in the hearts of many.

All of you who believe are also proof of that. You once had the same stubborn unbelief that the people of Nazareth had. God has broken down the unbelief in your heart and given you faith in Jesus as your Saviour. What a treasure your faith is. It is your most precious gift from God. So thank God every day for the faith that trusts in Jesus Christ. Thank God for your own faith and give special thanks if your family continues in the faith.

And Don't Give Up! God has given you the Gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation." Romans 1:16 The Spirit does have the power to break down the unbelief of your friends and family to give them faith. It usually doesn't happen right away. You may plant the word today, and perhaps years later it will begin to grow.

What happened with Jesus' brothers who didn't believe? A few years later, after Jesus rose from the dead, they too were brought to faith. His brother James became the Head of the church in Jerusalem and the writer of the Epistle of James in the Bible. Another brother, Judas is the author of the letter of Jude in the Bible. So if you have loved ones who are caught in the grip of unbelief, or are drifting away from the faith, don't give up on them. Pray for them daily and use every opportunity to share God's message of sin and grace, law and gospel. And watch what the Spirit can do.

Unbelief is incredibly powerful because it is part of our nature, but God is more powerful, His Word can break the power of unbelief in the heart and give all the blessings of faith in Christ.

Amen.