



# A LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR: DECEMBER 2020

by Lee Shipp

## BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF

Jesus went home! Intending to bring the blessings of God to His family and kinsmen, He went home. He was there to heal. He was there to perform miracles. He was there to teach them the gospel. But they were offended in Him, and by that offense they restrained Him from imparting the blessing of God to them.

According to Thayer's definition of Greek words their offense means to distrust and desert one whom they ought to trust and obey. It means to judge unfavorably or unjustly; to disapprove of, and thereby hindered from acknowledging the authority of the one they are offended by.

What was their reason for being offended in Jesus? Was it sin? No! Did He present an untrustworthy character? No! Was He inconsistent? No! Mark tells us in his gospel, chapter 6, that it was because He was familiar, and they could not understand where Jesus got such wisdom, power, and ability!

This was the boy who grew up there. His family was here. Just look, there were His brothers and sisters. Mary was His mother. They never spoke evil of Him. They never laid a charge against Him. They never referred to the mystery of His birth. They just could not believe, and therefore stumbled over Him, and could not acknowledge His authority. How sad.

This offense was so unfortunate as Mark testifies, "[Jesus] could there do no mighty work." Oh, the miracles they missed. The sick who would have been healed. The joy they would have relished in.

Jesus marveled! He was astonished and surprised at the unbelief of His family and countrymen. It had to be astounding to watch this unbelief. After all, they acknowledged His wisdom and authority. They could not deny His mighty power and ability to work miracles. But yet they resisted Him. There He was to help them, comfort them, love them, deliver them and they refused! What surprising unbelief.

In a comment regarding this passage in Mark 6, Burkitt says, *"An empty vessel capable of holding water, if tightly corked, none can enter it, though water is poured upon it in great abundance; nay, it may be thrown into the sea, and still remain empty. So, it is with our hearts; unbelief closes them, so that the water of life cannot fill them, however abundantly it may be poured upon and around us. Could not do many mighty works, etc. Unbelief hinders grace. This sin not only locks up the heart of a sinner, but also binds up the hands of a Savior."*

## WHAT IS UNBELIEF?

Many would assume that unbelief is to deny the ability of Jesus or reject the notion that He could actually perform miracles. But that is not the meaning of unbelief in this case. So, what is unbelief? After all they are acknowledging His wisdom. They cannot deny His miracles, nor do they try to. They do not refute His teachings; they do not condemn Him as a heretic who is spouting obscene doctrines. But they did not believe. What does this mean?

Perhaps, if we could understand the kind of unbelief that fails to experience the miracles and benevolence of God, we could

live in a new place with God. It is possible the Lord comes to us often, to help us, to deliver us but, we are acting in unbelief. We know God can heal, we know God can deliver, we know God is able but, due to our unbelief we are unable to receive what His benevolent heart wants to give us.

Unbelief is to be unfaithful. It is not being skeptical or in denial but, it is the failure to live what you cannot deny. It is to be passive before God. Though intellectually one may agree and acknowledge the reason to believe; instead, they refuse to expose and trust in the evidence that is right in front of them. It is the refusal to exercise trust in the face of fact. They could not deny Jesus, but they refused to exercise their faith in Him; therefore, they were unfaithful or manifested unbelief.

No wonder Jesus marveled. They would rather live tormented by demons than let Him deliver them. They would rather live in agony, pain, hardship and defeat, than allow Him to bless them. They would rather live suffering in sickness than have Jesus heal them. Amazing!

And still, it is so to this day. Multitudes of believers live in depression, defeat, despair because they refuse to exercise their praise of God. How stunning ... how sadly amazing is this unbelief. People know God will come to their praise, they cannot deny His faithfulness in the past but, they are unfaithful to practice praise!

## THE CHURCH IS FULL OF UNBELIEVERS

The church is full of unbelievers. Not the type of unbelievers that deny the existence of God, or God's ability to help them. But the kind of unbelief that is unfaithful and unwilling to do what God is asking. Dead faith is unbelief manifested. Every time one does not tithe, they are manifesting unbelief. Yet, they will wonder why they are suffering - amazing! Every time one does not pray for the sick, they are manifesting unbelief. Yet, they wonder why they don't see the miracles recorded in the book of Acts - amazing!

## DO YOU CAUSE JESUS TO MARVEL AT YOUR UNBELIEF OR DO YOU PLEASE HIM WITH BELIEF?

The people were offended in Jesus and insisted on keeping Jesus common. The people brought it home to family, traditions, and common things: This is the carpenter's son, His mother is Mary, His sisters and brothers are here with us; therefore, we cannot accept the fact that He is supernatural.

They had conditioned their minds to only receive a visitation of God that is far more spiritual and unique; they could not accept the fact that God's visitation would be in a boy who grew up just down the street. They had to admit He was special, even anointed, but they refused to accept His ability came from God, *"From whence hath this man these things? And what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands"* (Mark 6:2)? And likewise, multitudes of churches die, and believers suffer because they make praise common and trite.

How can praise answer my huge problems? How can praise save my marriage? How can praise bring healing to my wife? Therefore, people turn away in unbelief. They cannot deny that praise is the command of God, they cannot deny that praise is what has caused God to come in power, but yet they refuse to practice praise.

We know what God wants; however, we don't give it to Him because we make the Holy common. We *"box"* holy exercises, such as praise, into family traditions and experiences that lead to unbelief; unbelief being the failure to act. It could look something like this, I see that the Bible calls us to praise God, to lift our hands, to shout, to sing, to dance but that is not the way we did it when I was growing up, or that is not my tradition in church.

So please allow me to plead with you my dear friend. I cannot bear the thought of Jesus standing in your midst marveling at your unbelief. My heart aches with the thought that you would

forgo the manifestation of God's power, help, and healing because praise was too common, and you exercised unbelief.

For the right and holy reasons, I desire to seek the presence of God in our church. But how capable is the unbelief in others at robbing us of His presence. As the ten spies in Israel, you can refuse to believe God and cause the entire church to rebel against God. As Cain, you can demand, *"This is what I am going to give God and He should be happy with my offering, even if it is not what He asked me to give."*

All it takes is a cynical attitude, *"Oh, you don't have to do all that. We never did that growing up!"* And you can restrain every good thing God would have given us. And just look at our world and our kids who are becoming Marxists and atheists! If more believers would have enjoyed the presence of God, then our children would not have had to seek fulfillment in atheism! What is more, though leadership may be trying to take us where God wants us to be, the entire congregation can be robbed from that blessing by the attitude of a few unbelievers. Can you imagine the people in Jesus' village who would have been healed if it were not for the few instigators who made Him common and filled the people with unbelief?

## PRIASE IS NOT UNHOLY

Beloved, praise is not common or unholy; praise is the most consistent action in heaven! It is the call of God to all believers, and the means of experiencing His presence. When David became king, his chief desire was to have the presence of God, *"How shall the ark of the Lord come to me" (2 Samuel 6:9)?*

During Saul's reign, the ark of God was lost to the enemies. When David was enthroned, he was determined to return the ark to Jerusalem. In an effort to transport the ark to Jerusalem, David did not follow God's prescribed way and one of David's men was killed by God. Very afraid of the Lord, David is perplexed as to how he will recover God's presence.

Searching the scriptures, David understood how to move God's presence. Following the prescribed way of moving the ark, as laid out by God, David had the priest carry the ark. All the while the ark is being carried, David played before God with all his might. The atmosphere was filled with instruments playing, people singing, and multitudes joyful with loud praise (1 Chronicles 15:16).

It is recorded that Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting and music. Beloved this was God's prescribed way, it has not changed. To bring in the presence of God our churches ought to be filled with loud music, singing, joyful praise, and shouting. Do you do this? Do you cause Jesus to marvel at your unbelief or do you please Him with belief?

As God's presence drew near, David danced and played with all his might. Furthermore, David stationed ministers before the Lord's presence to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel (1 Chronicles 16:4).

David looked like a fool! His wife was so embarrassed of him that she despised him and rebuked him. Wow, does your praise expose you to this type of ridicule? And if it does not is your praise that which pleases you and man but not God?

What did this rebuke do to David? Did he stop praising? Did he tone it down to not be so embarrassing? Absolutely not! *"And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD. And I will yet be viler than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maid servants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor. Therefore, Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death" (2 Samuel 6:21-23).*

Please notice who was barren for the rest of her life. It was the person who is embarrassed of praise. It is the person who cannot praise. And I have seen this to be true in the church. Parents who cannot praise God have lost their children to the world. People who cannot praise God the way God wants hardly have one convert to Jesus. How sad.

## GOD TOLD US HOW TO APPROACH HIM

God has given us His prescribed way! This way was revealed

to David and Paul. Paul revealed in his epistles why so many are living in despair. According to Romans 1, torment and despair are the direct result of a lack of thanksgiving and praise to God. *"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:21).*

Those who approach God as He intended are actively serving as His priests. They minister unto God and benefit the congregation. These ministering priests are actively pursuing the presence of God in such measure that God's response to their faithful praise is a blessing to the whole congregation. As a result of people's praise, the Lord comes and fights for the people. His presence brings joy and healing, deliverance and victory.

It is the priests of the Lord who carry the presence of God. David was keenly aware of the necessity of praise and the response of the Lord. David saw beyond the shadows and understood the reality. David said, *"Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Psalms 141:2).* David is referring the practice God gave Israel in the sacrifices and offerings prescribed by Moses.

But David saw past Moses' order and saw the reality. In 1 Chronicles 28, verses 12 and 19, David confesses that the Spirit of God gave him revelation of what all these practices represented. *"And the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit ... All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern."*

What did the Lord reveal to David? Was it possible that the Lord showed David scenes in heaven; scenes of which the types represented? I believe He did show David these things. How else could David ask of the Lord, let my prayer be as incense and the lifting of my hands as the evening sacrifice if he had not understood what this actually meant? For in the book of Revelation John was shown this scene in heaven and it is exactly what David is asking God to let his prayers and praise be. *"And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand" (Revelation 5:8; 8:3-4).*

Is it any wonder that David appointed all kinds of musical instruments and the lifting of voices with joy and praise to God? David was intent to fill the heavens from the praise of God's people on earth. David was intent on filling God's presence in heaven with the incense of those who adored Him on earth.

## LET US FILL THE HEAVENS WITH OUR PRAISE

I too am zealous to affect the heavens from the praise of those who adore God on earth. I feel very strongly about this revelation of God to His priests. Beloved, you cannot separate praise and the presence of God; therefore, how can I but praise the One I long to be with? How I crave the presence of God. What do we have if we do not have the presence of God? Therefore, let us praise Him and rejoice always!

Please understand, I am not trying to get you to praise so we can be emotional (though I believe it is very emotional) or to just have a service that is different and exciting. Rather, I am compelling you to praise God because it is God's prescribed way, and He honors the praise we give Him by giving us His presence.

We need to praise. We need to worship by the Spirit's power and in truth till God descends upon us and enters into our house of prayer and fills us with His glory. I long for the day that multitudes come to see the wonder of God in our midst. I love the living church of God where multitudes are being healed and delivered because the priests of the Lord have brought down the glory of God.

We need God. We need His presence because there is healing in His presence; healing that can cure the multitudes who gather in our churches. Therefore, praise Him! He will come.

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