

Overcoming Doubt with Faith

Have we ever faced doubts in our lives? What would have caused those doubts? We expect something and it doesn't work out the way we expect it to and doubts are birthed in our minds. So often we shake our fists at God for not giving us what we want – or need – as if He gave us false expectations. Where did these expectations come from and why blame God for our doubts if these expectations weren't from Him?

Matthew 14: 22 – 33

1) The possibility of the Christian doubting

- A synonym of doubt is “uncertainty”
 - When we doubt it is because we are uncertain of the outcome of something.
 - We aren't sure of who we can trust – distrust and disbelief are other synonyms of doubt
- Doubt isn't something new – it has been around since Adam and Eve
 - In the Garden of Eden Satan sowed seeds of doubt into Eve's mind who then passed on the seeds of doubt to Adam
 - Before Satan came along Adam and Eve were convinced that what they heard was God's Word which was to be implicitly obeyed. After Eve had a visit from Satan she wavered in her conviction of what God had said and disobeyed Him.
 - Adam, instead of standing firm in what God had said also wavered and sinned
- We tend to downplay the gravity of doubt but it was doubt that caused Adam and Eve to sin throwing the whole world into depravity.
- Abraham had doubts about his security when he moved to Gerar and lied to king Abimelech calling Sarah his sister. Abimelech almost lost his life through Abraham's doubts
- King Saul doubted the Word of God through Samuel and offered sacrifices himself instead of waiting for Samuel. He lost his kingdom.
- The apostles were constantly doubting Jesus – all of them even though we like to always refer to Thomas as doubting Thomas
 - Peter doubted Jesus and began to sink after walking on the water
 - Thomas doubted the resurrection of the Lord
 - When Jesus met his disciples on the mountain outside Jerusalem just before His ascension into heaven some doubted (Matthew 28: 17)
- It is quite clear that true believers can go through times of doubt.

2) The doubting Christian

- What causes a Christian – one who has put his/her faith in Jesus for salvation – to doubt
 - Taking our eyes off Jesus and putting them onto our circumstances like Peter did. He started off by stepping out the boat in great faith at the word of Jesus but then took his eyes off Jesus – “When he saw the wind he was afraid”.
 - We can start off with great faith and then start doubting when we focus on our circumstances rather than on the Lord
 - We have expectations that aren't met so we doubt – are uncertain – whether the direction that we are going in is the correct one or not. Many Jews had expectations that Jesus was going to be the Messiah who will overthrow the Romans and set Israel free from Roman rule. When those expectations weren't met they started to doubt if He really was the Messiah. Even John the Baptist had his doubts when he was in prison and questioned whether Jesus was the Messiah or not.
 - Trials can cause us to doubt as we wonder where God is in our trials. We may trust God for His provision and then suddenly lose our job and not be able to find another one and we wonder how God could promise to provide for us when we are going through such trials. Or we take hold of God's protection and always quote Psalm 91 and then disaster strikes our family. It is quite natural that doubt would creep in to our hearts.

- Rationalization replaces faith and sows doubt into our hearts and minds. We start rationalizing – explaining away God’s word – instead of holding onto it by faith. Liberal theologians do this and try explain away the miraculous in the Bible but we all do it when we don’t trust God in EVERY circumstance and try and figure out how we going to get through our circumstances on our own.
- Doubting has consequences
 - James 1: 6 – 8 He who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.
 - A doubter is blown and tossed by the wind – some people have a different opinion on matters each week according to who they have been listening to. They have no sure foundation and so people can’t trust them because the next time we see them they have a different philosophy on matters
 - He won’t receive anything from the Lord – God gives to those who trust Him not those who doubt Him
 - He is double minded – these are fence sitters. They try and please everyone and end up not pleasing anyone especially the Lord
 - He is unstable in all he does – people normally stay away from people who are unstable.
 - Jesus did not commend Peter for his faith when he got out the boat to walk on the water rather he rebuked him for his lack of faith and asked “why did you doubt?” Jesus also said to Thomas, “Stop doubting and believe.”
 - Sometimes we want the Lord to pat us on the back for the good faithful things we have done but are taken aback when He offers a rebuke for doubting instead.
 - Doubting is sin - the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.(Romans 14: 23)
- If we are any of the above then we need to make some changes in our lives urgently.

3) Overcoming doubt with faith

- The fundamental change that we would need to make in our lives is to stop doubting and believe
 - Matthew 21: 21 – 22 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."
 - We can try and figure our lives out – what we are going through now or the future – or we can trust God with our lives knowing that He has us in the palm of His hand.
 - Our pet cats are always relaxed as they are certain that will have food every day. When I walk into the kitchen in the morning they come running to the kitchen knowing that their food bowls are going to be filled.
 - Isn’t it amazing that those cats have more faith in me than most of us have in God?
- How do we stop doubting?
 - By believing – by taking God at His word knowing for certain that His word is absolutely true regardless of our circumstances.
- I started off by saying that a synonym of doubt is uncertainty. Faith, on the other hand is certainty.
 - Hebrews 11: 1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and **certain** of what we do not see.
- By faith we are certain:
 - That God will provide for us when we can’t see how
 - That God will vindicate us when we are falsely accused
 - That God will make a way into our future when we can’t see the way out of our present circumstances
 - That God’s best will be done in our lives even if we can’t see how at the moment

By faith we hold onto God and allow that unwavering faith to dismiss any temptation of doubting God practically in our lives.