

Doubts That Do Not Damage

Luke 1:5-22, 62-64

Doubts That Do Not Damage

- Confidence in the scriptures and in our ability to read and understand them is critically important to spiritual success.
 - We are robbed of stability in our belief and practice.
 - We will be without the means or the confidence to save others who have fallen victim to false doctrine.
 - We will be without the ability or the drive to proclaim the good news of salvation from sins and the promise of a home in heaven.
 - We will lose what makes the Lord's Church unique and distinct from man-made religions

Doubt Is Universal

- Luke 1:5-22, 62-64
- Every honest person has struggled with doubt.
 - Abraham tried to make Eliezer and Ishmael his heir
 - Gideon the Judge tested the angel of the Lord
 - Asaph the Psalmist nearly told the people to give up on God
 - Elijah ran away and hid in a cave
 - Jeremiah questioned God's instructions at every turn
 - Zacharias, priest and father of John the Baptist, doubted the word of an angel sent from God

Doubt Is Universal

- “Believe in God, and you will have to face hours when it seems obvious that this material world is the only reality; disbelieve in Him, and you must face hours when this material world seems to shout at you that it is not all. No conviction religious or irreligious will, of itself, end once and for all this fifth-columnist in the soul. Only the practice of faith resulting in the habit of faith will gradually do that.” (C. S. Lewis, “Focal Point,” July-September, 1989)

Doubt Is Universal

- Doubt comes in varying degrees
- The doubt of the proud skeptic who delights in his own intellect.
 - Psalm 14:1 - “The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.”

Doubt Is Universal

- The doubt of the person who wants to believe, but is struggling with difficult questions
 - John 7:17 - “If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.”

Doubt Is Universal

- The doubt of the believer who has taken his eyes off the Lord in a difficult trial
 - Matt. 8:25-26 - “Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us! We are perishing! 26 But He said to them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.”
 - Mark 9:22-24 - “And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us. 23 Jesus said to him, If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes. 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

Doubt Is Universal

- What can Zacharias teach us about dealing with doubt?
 - Zacharias and his wife, Elizabeth, prayed for a son.
 - He resigned himself to his view of reality; they were too old.
 - He believed this to the point of doubting the word of an angel of God.

Doubt Even Besets The Righteous

- Luke 1:6 - “And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.”
- Matt. 11:2-6 - “And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples 3 and said to Him, Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another? 4 Jesus answered and said to them, Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: 5 The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. 6 And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.”
- Gen. 17:17 - “Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?”

Doubt Even Besets The Righteous

- Doubt is universal. More relevant questions are:
 - What kind of doubt am I experiencing?
 - What is the source of my doubt?

Doubt Even Besets The Righteous

- Doubt does not come from a lack of evidence.
- Consider Zacharias' reaction to the angel
 - Luke 1:12, 18 - "And Zacharias said to the angel, How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years."

Doubt Even Besets The Righteous

- God has spoken and given sufficient evidence
 - Luke 16:27-31 - “Then he said, I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, 28 for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment. 29 Abraham said to him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30 And he said, No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent. 31 But he said to him, If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.”

Doubt Even Besets The Righteous

- Philip had seen Jesus perform miracles, and yet he couldn't imagine how the Lord would resolve feeding the multitude
 - John 6:5-7 - “Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat? 6 But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. 7 Philip answered Him, Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.”

Doubt Even Besets The Righteous

- The disconnect happens within us
 - We forget the power of God, we forget the wisdom of God, we forget the consistent promise keeping of God, and we forget the record of the proofs of God's love and care
 - We have allowed other things to block our view: we judge the difficulty of the problem based on our ability to solve it, or by what we know of the limits of life in this world

Doubt Even Besets The Righteous

- Doubt is often connected with disappointments or long-term trials.
 - Acts 12:12-15 - “So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. 13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. 15 But they said to her, You are beside yourself! Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, It is his angel.”

The Solution For Doubt

- The solution for doubt is simple to say, but a challenge to apply. It is to choose to see that God will do what He says He will do.
- “Zechariah, righteous as he is, needs to learn that God will fulfill his promises when He sovereignly chooses to act.... The major lesson ... is that God will do what He promises in His own way”
(Darrell Bock, Comments on Luke [IVP], p. 37)

The Solution For Doubt

- We know through His prophetic word that God does what he says.
- In this very chapter, Luke records the prophecy of the births of John and Jesus, and later the births of both that occurred exactly as prophesied.
 - 2Peter 1:19 - “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place”

The Solution For Doubt

- We know through His loving discipline that God does what He says.
- Zacharias' chastisement was appropriate for his doubt.
 - Luke 1:20, 62 - "But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time... 62 So they made signs to his father--what he would have him called... 67 Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied"

The Solution For Doubt

- Thankfully, doubt need never be fatal. We can recover if we will submit to God's gracious discipline.
- Luke 1:68-79 - Zacharias praises God for keeping His promises
- We can either grumble and chafe under discipline, and be overcome by doubt and resentment
- Or we can thankfully submit to it; in which case, we will grow stronger in faith
- We can overcome the problem of doubt if we will see that God does what He says He will do.

The Solution For Doubt

- In the matter of faith and doubt, the crucial thing is not our feelings and not even our thoughts and beliefs. The important thing is the object of our faith.
- The doubts that we have, prove that we need a Savior, because we are subject to weakness and temptation. When we face our doubts by seeing God in scripture, we will come out on the other side of our doubts better people for the experience, just like Zacharias

God Gives Us Power To Overcome Our Doubts

- Jesus does not change
 - Heb. 13:8-9 - “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. 9 Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.”
- We are stabilized by what Jesus gives us
 - Eph. 4:11-16
 - Isa. 32:17 - “The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.”

God Gives Us Power To Overcome Our Doubts

- Jesus Christ gives us confidence
 - Heb. 10:19-23 - “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”

God Gives Us Power To Overcome Our Doubts

- Paul had full confidence in the Savior
 - 2Tim. 1:8-12 - “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, 10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 11 to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. 12 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”

God Gives Us Power To Overcome Our Doubts

- Our confidence rests on the unchanging Rock
 - Eph. 3:8-12 - “To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; 10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.”

God Gives Us Power To Overcome Our Doubts

- We can know we are of the truth
 - 1John 3:18-22 - “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. 19 And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. 20 For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. 22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”
 - 2Peter 1:10 - “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble”

God Gives Us Power To Overcome Our Doubts

- Our hope is based on the unchangeable promise of God
 - Heb. 6:15-19 - “And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. 17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,”

God Gives Us Power To Overcome Our Doubts

- What can I do?
 - I recognize my limited knowledge and my need to grow, but that which I have already learned, I can take confidence in and press forward.
 - I don't have to know with 100% certainty in order to commit myself to Him 100%