

## Doubt.

What is doubt? In the Bible the English word `doubt` translates a New Testament Greek word which means, basically, “without a way”. It’s the condition of not being able to see a way out of your distressing situation. It carries the idea of perplexity and believing that we have no resources to help. For the Christian it happens when we take our eyes off Jesus.

We see it illustrated in Peter when he walked on the water. We read in Matthew 14 verses 29-30, “Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came towards Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, cried out, `Lord save me!`. The reply of the Lord Jesus is significant. Having lifted Peter out of danger he says in verse 31, “You of little faith why did you doubt?” You see, Peter had stopped looking at Jesus, and turned his eyes to the winds and waves. He panicked and sank. The story shows us that Jesus wants to help us in our times of doubt. Doubt isn’t unbelief. Doubt is little faith. Even in that moment of doubt and despair Jesus still talked to Peter. Fellowship continues between you and the Lord. To doubt doesn’t suggest that you’re not a true believer. It’s certainly a weakness. It certainly isn’t a commendable feature when you recall that God has called us to a life of faith. Doubt is actually a sign that spiritual life is there in your soul. The unsaved person doesn’t doubt he just doesn’t believe. Be sure that your doubt isn’t in reality the evil heart of unbelief. Make sure that you’re truly a Christian and born again of God’s Spirit.

Doubt is part of the spiritual battle we fight as we seek to serve the Lord. God's will is for you to deal with your doubt. He wants you enjoy assurance of your salvation. He wants you to be assured of his presence. Paul said in 2 Timothy 1 verse 12, "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day". There are certain things that will cause doubt to develop. We need to identify these and how to address them. It's possible to lack a good understanding of your salvation. The greater your grasp of scripture the stronger your faith will become. We read in Romans 10 verse 17, "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ". Some Christians are like the couple who went on a world cruise. The Captain noticed they didn't turn up for their meals. He went to their cabin to see what was wrong. He found them there eating cheese and crackers and drinking water. They hadn't read their booking conditions carefully, and didn't realise that they had three five course meals a day! God says in Hosea 4 verse 6, "My people are destroyed through lack of knowledge". Be students of the Bible. Study key words that have to do with your salvation.

Look at God's promises to those who believe. Meditate on the word of God and let its truths deeply affect you heart and mind. This will work against doubt when you're in the storms of life.

Then, unconfessed sin can cause doubt. This is because it brings guilt and a lack of the sense of God's presence. Make sure that you confess your sins and forsake them. We read in 1John 1 verse 9, "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins". God will forgive you, and you'll experience his closeness in a new way. This will remove any doubt about the reality of your salvation.

Being inactive in Christian service can bring doubt. John the Baptist was alone in prison. In Matthew 11 verse 3 he asked this question to Jesus, "Are you the one who was to come or should we expect someone else?" He began to doubt that Jesus was the promised Messiah. John wasn't in prison by choice, but there is a principle here. When you become less active in your service for Christ, and less occupied with the thrill of the adventure and wonder of serving God, you begin to dry up spiritually. You become inward looking and entertain doubts about the things of God. Be active in service for the Lord. Look for ways where you can serve him in the community and in the church.

Misleading theology can produce doubt. Maybe you were told when you first became a Christian that all your problems would disappear. So when trials come you doubt whether you're saved, or that the gospel is really the answer to your life's emptiness. Someone once said, "Some people feel that God is nowhere if they don't feel Goosebumps an inch high!!" You must recognise from the outset that in the world you will have problems. When you come to know Jesus it's the beginning of a relationship.

When a couple are getting married they say, "I do", not, "I've done it". Why? Because they've just started on the ups and downs of married life. So it is when you first trust Jesus. You've begun a journey with its trials and joys. The Lord will be with you in both.

Doubt can arise when you face distressing circumstances in life. Maybe you've faced bereavement, or you've been made redundant, or you've gone through a time of illness. You begin to doubt God's love for you.

Remember Romans 8 verse 28, "In all things God works for the good of those who love him". Maybe you've had disappointments relating to prayer. You doubt that God has heard you. God always answers prayer. Sometimes it's a direct yes. Other times its no and your request is denied. The answer may be delayed and you're made to wait a while. Sometimes there is a different answer than the one you expected. You may feel frustrated, but God has heard and he will answer in his own time and way. We read in Isaiah 65 verse 24, "Before they call I will answer and; while they are still speaking I will hear". The greatest antidote to doubt is a thankful heart. It keeps you focused on God's faithfulness. We're exhorted in 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 18, "give thanks in all circumstances". That means everything, even the not so good experiences of life. We can do it because we know God is our kind heavenly father who is doing all that is right for us. So the Lord Jesus leaves us with the searching question, "Why did you doubt?"