

DEALING WITH DOUBT

WHAT IS IT?

- Uncertainty about the truth and reality of spiritual things
- Scepticism
- Unbelief
- Agnosticism
- suspicion

Quotes

Faith and Doubt

Doubt sees the obstacles.

Faith sees the way!

Doubt sees the darkest night,

Faith sees the day!

Doubt dreads to take a step.

Faith soars on high!

Doubt questions, "Who believes?"

Faith answers, "I!"

—*Gospel Banner*

Believe your beliefs and doubt your doubts

EFFECTS OF DOUBT

- Doubt is a reality that affects the lives of many believers.
- doubt can bring about feelings of insufficiency and low self esteem
- Doubt, to us, often feels like we are not fulfilling our role as his servants of God
- In shame, we have the tendency to hide our doubt, believing that we must have no cracks if we are to lead others with integrity.

WE DOUBT GOD'S POWER

A royal servant who doubted and questioned Elisha that God would provide flour

2 Kings 7: 1- 20

- This is a story of famine in the besieged city of Samaria
- As a result of the famine, food prices have skyrocketed
- No food is available – mother have resorted to eating their children
- The king blames Elisha for all this and wants his head off his shoulder

- Elisha the prophet when confronted by the king's servant – declares that the famine will end the following day
- That there will be too much food so that prices will plummet
- This is a ridiculous declaration in the eyes of the human mind
- It invokes doubt in the mind of the king's servant, and he questions God's potency – for him, not even God can pull this off
- Elisha tells him – that he will see this happen but will not partake of it
- Doubter can never partake of the promises of God
- That is why an entire generation of Israel perished in the wilderness
- The two lepers are different and their faith to take the step towards the enemy's camp – activates a mighty miracle - that causes the enemy to flee their camp in haste – leaving behind all the food
- The Word of God though Elisha comes to pass

DOUBTERS

Examples of those doubting their effectiveness to serve God

Moses

Exodus 3:11 (ESV)

11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Exodus 4:1 (ESV)

1 Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'"

Exodus 4:10–13 (ESV)

10 But Moses said to the LORD, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." 11 Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? 12 Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak." 13 But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else."

Gideon

Judges 6:15 (ESV)

15 And he said to him, "Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."

Judges 6:17 (ESV)

And he said to him, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me."

Elijah

1 Kings 19:3–4 (ESV)

*Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. **4** But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers."*

Jeremiah

Jeremiah 1:6 (ESV)

Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth."

THOSE TEMPORARILY DOUBTING GOD'S PROMISES

Genesis 17:17–18 (ESV)

*Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" **18** And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!"*

Genesis 18:12–15 (ESV)

***12** So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" **13** The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' **14** Is anything*

too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.” 15 But Sarah denied it, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. He said, “No, but you did laugh.”

QUESTION: IS YOUR FAITH PERFECT?

- In other words, have you become so strong in your belief that there is no possibility of your still needing to grow?
- If you are honest, you will answer with a clear “No!”
- But don’t worry; you are like the great apostle Paul, who confessed that even he had yet to arrive at perfection

Phil. 3:12

² Not that I have already attained,^[a] or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have ^[d]apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

- The reality is that no one’s faith is ever perfect in this life.
- That includes you.
- And if your faith is not perfect, it means that it can grow and become stronger today than it was yesterday.

I like to think of doubt as the gap between our current faith and perfect faith.

- If this is the case, we all doubt!
- Not only this, but there is nothing that Christians cannot doubt.
 - Sometimes we doubt our salvation;
 - other times it’s God’s love for us.
 - Many times we will even doubt the reliability of Scripture,
 - the existence of God, or
 - the identity of Christ.

Even John the Baptist, whom Christ called the greatest man ever born of a woman

Matt. 11:11

Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

once expressed doubt about the very identity of Christ

Matt. 11:3

And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he [a]sent two of his disciples³ and said to Him, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?”

HOW DO WE REMEDY DOUBT?

- Uncertainty may be remedied by gaining assurance from God’s word,
- remembering God’s past goodness,
- reflecting on his power and appealing to his unfailing love.
- Believers should help the weak with the patience and encouragement that reflects God’s own compassion.

Doubt is dealt with by holding on to God’s truth

- **Gaining assurance from God’s word**

Psalm 119:147 (ESV)

I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words.

1 John 5:13 (ESV)

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

Psalm 119:116 (ESV)

Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope!

John 20:31 (ESV)

but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Romans 15:4 (ESV)

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

2 Peter 1:19 (ESV)

And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,

Receiving correction and understanding through God's word

2 Timothy 3:14–17 (ESV)

*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it **15** and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

Doubt dealt with by meditating on God's works

Remembering God's past deeds

Psalm 77:10–20 (ESV)

*Then I said, "I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High." **11** I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. **12** I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. **13** Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God? **14** You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples. **15** You with your arm redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph. Selah **16** When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid; indeed, the deep trembled. **17** The clouds poured out water; the skies gave forth thunder; your arrows flashed on every side. **18** The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind; your lightnings lighted up the world; the earth trembled and shook. **19** Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen. **20** You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.*

Deuteronomy 7:17–19 (ESV)

*"If you say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I. How can I dispossess them?' **18** you shall not be afraid of them but you shall remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, **19** the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand, and the outstretched arm, by which the LORD your God brought you out. So will the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.*

1 Chronicles 16:8–12 (ESV)

*Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! **9** Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! **10** Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice! **11** Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually! **12** Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles and the judgments he uttered,*

Psalm 22:4–5 (ESV)

In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. 5 To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

Psalm 74:12–17 (ESV)

Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. 13 You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters. 14 You crushed the heads of Leviathan; you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness. 15 You split open springs and brooks; you dried up ever-flowing streams. 16 Yours is the day, yours also the night; you have established the heavenly lights and the sun. 17 You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth; you have made summer and winter.

Psalm 143:5 (ESV)

I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands.

Isaiah 46:9 (ESV)

remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,

Matthew 16:9–10 (ESV)

Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? 10 Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered?

REFLECTING ON DIVINE POWER

Matthew 11:4–6 (ESV)

And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. 6 And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

John 10:38 (ESV)

but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”

John 14:11 (ESV)

11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

DOUBT DEALT WITH BY TRUSTING

- **Trusting in God's unfailing love**

Psalm 6:2–4 (ESV)

2 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled. 3 My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O LORD—how long? 4 Turn, O LORD, deliver my life; save me for the sake of your steadfast love.

Psalm 42:8 (ESV)

8 By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.

Isaiah 49:15–16 (ESV)

15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. 16 Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.

Isaiah 54:10 (ESV)

10 For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

Jeremiah 31:3–4 (ESV)

3 the LORD appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you. 4 Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! Again you shall adorn yourself with tambourines and shall go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.

TRUSTING IN GOD'S PRESENCE

Genesis 28:15 (ESV)

15 Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Exodus 3:12 (ESV)

12 He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

Deuteronomy 20:1 (ESV) — 1 "When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

2 Chronicles 20:15–17 (ESV)

15 And he said, "Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's. 16 Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the valley, east of the wilderness of Jeruel. 17 You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you."

Psalm 42:11 (ESV)

11 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

Psalm 73:23–26 (ESV)

23 Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. 24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. 25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

TRUSTING IN GOD'S STRENGTH

Isaiah 41:10 (ESV)

10 fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

1 Kings 19:6–8 (ESV)

6 And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. 7 And the angel of the LORD came again a

second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you."
8 And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

Isaiah 40:28–31 (ESV)

28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.
29 He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. **30** Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; **31** but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 43:2 (ESV)

2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR ANYONE WITH DOUBTS

Judges 20:22 (ESV)

But the people, the men of Israel, took courage, and again formed the battle line in the same place where they had formed it on the first day.

Job 4:3–4 (ESV)

*Behold, you have instructed many, and you have strengthened the weak hands. **4** Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have made firm the feeble knees.*

2 Chronicles 32:6–8 (ESV)

*And he set combat commanders over the people and gathered them together to him in the square at the gate of the city and spoke encouragingly to them, saying, **7** "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him, for there are more with us than with him. **8** With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles." And the people took confidence from the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.*

Isaiah 35:3–4 (ESV)

*Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. **4** Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you."*

Hebrews 10:23–25 (ESV)

*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. **24** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, **25** not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*