

Doubts on the Journey: Where Do We Turn?

Do you doubt? Have you doubted? I believe doubts of one kind or the other affect all of us at various times. Doubts have a way of bringing sorrow. Certainly they take away joy and can destroy hope. To be without hope is fearful.

Jesus lovingly reassures us. He not only calls us by name, but also continually calls us to follow Him. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:28,29).

Fear and Great Joy

To doubt is not a new phenomenon. God's Word relates much of the joys and sorrows of the former saints. On the first Easter morning doubt-filled and grieving women approached Christ's sepulcher in the predawn darkness. The angel's message first brought fear, then great joy. "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen" (Matt. 28:5,6). The joyful message said that Jesus is not dead. He lives! He is risen!

We can imagine the great joy and praise with which the women delivered this message to the disciples. The fearful and doubt-ridden disciples did not have strength yet to believe that warm and joyous word. "And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not" (Luke 24:11).

In the Lord's School

Later that same day, the two disciples were walking on the way to Emmaus. "And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them" (Luke 24:15). They did not recognize the Lord Jesus. Grief and doubt overwhelmed their fearful hearts. With patience and love, our Lord began to teach them about the simplicity of living faith. He reminded them about what the Old Testament Scriptures said and explained that the prophets had foretold of Jesus a long time before.

The living Word began to warm their cold and doubting minds. It felt good to be in the school of our Lord, although they still did not know who He was. Jesus made as if to continue on His way, but the disciples wanted Him to stay with them. He did. "He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave it to them" (Luke 24:30). Only then were their eyes opened, and they knew Him. At the same time Jesus left their sight. The disciples then said one to another, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32).

It is easy to picture these two joyfully praising God. Certainly it was with light footsteps that they ran to tell the joyful message to the others who were fearfully huddled behind locked doors. How was the joyous news received? "And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them" (Mark 16:13). It was into this room, moments later that Jesus appeared. How did He respond to this doubting and fearful group of believers? He said to them, "Peace be unto you" (John 20:19).

Doubts Obscure Salvation

Where do we today receive comfort and new strength? We also are often doubt-ridden, troubled over many things, and wearied over daily struggles that overtake. Doubts obscure our view of salvation's way. Yet the way to heaven is so clearly marked that the prophet assures us that not even a fool would be led astray. God's Word uplifts, comforts, and gives new strength. It warms our cold and empty hearts. We are leaky vessels and need to be filled with God's goodness again and again.

It has always been so that the living Word of God through His Spirit dispels doubt, worry, and sin. Believing the

gospel brings peace, joy, and righteousness. Jesus reassures us of this peace of God. “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

It is noteworthy to pause at this earlier referenced portion, “While they communed together and reasoned.” This is a phenomenon of today as well. Man tries to use the reason and wisdom of this world in all things. There is a place for it in temporal life; it is an incredible blessing. Yet, in the spiritual realm concerning matters of faith, reason and man’s wisdom only supports our doubting mind. The voice of reason, which often echoes through our minds, can simply overwhelm faith.

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:6,7). The carnal mind is enmity, or deep-seated hatred against God.

Turn to God’s Word

Where do we turn from the obscuring veil of doubt? Only to our Lord Jesus and His Word spoken through His Holy Spirit. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

This is a precious reminder to all of us. A troubled and doubting conscience desires peace, rest, and a gracious God. It yearns for salvation. Luther says, “When doubts arise, fight it. Let him practice faith, fight against doubt, and labor to recapture certainty, in order that he can say: ‘I know that I am accepted by God and have the Holy Spirit, not for the sake of worthiness or merit on my part, but for the sake of Christ...He bore the sins of the whole world...in Him I believe. If I am a sinner and am erring, He is just and cannot err.’”

We are made pure and without sin through Christ’s merit work. We are safe and secure in God’s kingdom. The Lord Jesus promises, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5).

A Future and Hope

God grants blessings in our lives, and a future with hope. “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil...Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you” (Jer. 29:11,12).

Our Heavenly Father sees our trials and our doubts. He hears our sighs and prayers. It is comforting how the psalmist reassures, “In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul” (Ps. 94:19).

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Questions to Discuss:

1. What factors can contribute to experiencing doubts? What tactics does the enemy use to try to cause a person to doubt and question?
2. How do faith and reason contradict each other? How can they harm a person? What does God’s Word say about this?
3. Consider an example of a time in your life when doubts weighed heavily. How did you get through this time? What helped to give strength and renew hope?
4. Is it easy to approach a fellow believer who is struggling with doubt and reason? What can help? In what manner do we

approach such a one?

5. Sing song of Zion #365. How were the disciples' doubts and fears similar to ours today? What reassured and comforted them? Where can we find hope and comfort?