

WITHOUT A DOUBT

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A defendant was on trial for murder in Oklahoma. There was strong evidence indicating guilt, but there was no corpse.

In the defense's closing statement the lawyer, knowing that his client would probably be convicted, resorted to a trick.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I have a surprise for you all," the lawyer said as he looked at his watch. "Within one minute, the person presumed dead in this case will walk into this courtroom."

He looked toward the courtroom door. The jurors, somewhat stunned, all looked on eagerly. A minute passed. Nothing happened.

Finally the lawyer said, "Actually, I made up the previous statement. But you all looked on with anticipation. I, therefore, put it to you that there is reasonable doubt in this case as to whether anyone was killed and insist that you return a verdict of not guilty."

The jury, clearly confused, retired to deliberate. A few minutes later, the jury returned and pronounced a verdict of guilty.

"But how?" inquired the lawyer. "You must have had some doubt; I saw all of you stare at the door."

Answered the jury foreman: "Oh, we did look. But your client didn't."

You know you have doubts when your prayer goes something like this: "O God, if there is a God, save my soul so I can go to heaven, if there is a heaven." Doubt is usually not a laughing matter. Dealing with doubt is difficult.

A Christian businessman is laid off only six months before retirement and the company he worked for somehow managed to finagle it so that he lost all his retirement benefits. He honestly expresses his anger to God, "God, that's not fair! I don't know if Christianity is worth it! How can you say you love me when you allow something bad like this to happen." Have you ever been there? Have you ever wondered if God really did care about you?

You watch a news documentary about the devastating drought in a third world country. There's a mother cradling her dead baby crying out in anguish. You can't understand her words, but you imagine she is saying something like, "God, why did you let my baby die. All we needed was a little rain? Why did you let my baby die!" You begin to wonder how a good God could do such a thing? Or fail to be moved to prevent it. Have you ever had these kind of thoughts?

A man says, "I can't imagine a God who would destroy anyone in hell. I would never willingly torture anyone no matter how evil he was." You feel the weight of his words and begin to wonder.

When doubts about God and His love come in, what are we to do with them?

"Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4.

Faith is "the evidence of things not seen." Heb. 11:1. By faith we know that which is true in the things that pertain to our salvation, but which we cannot perceive by our natural senses. It constitutes an avenue through which we receive the most important information, which could not come to us by any means over which we have control.

No one can overcome the world and gain eternal life, save he that is born of God. And no one can know that he is born of God except by faith. Without the evidence which faith supplies, we should be without power to withstand the forces of evil.

Faith is the point at which Satan makes his attack. He caused our first parents to fall by getting them to doubt God's word. He presented before Eve appearances which made his story plausible. He, a serpent, had eaten of the forbidden tree, and had, he said, acquired great wisdom and the power of speech; and therefore it was not true that in the day one ate of it he would surely die. He succeeded with Eve, and he has tried the same tactics with great success upon her descendants. Faith is the connecting link between the soul and God; and when that is broken by doubt, the individual is in Satan's power.

God has said that "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." 1 John 5:1. This is true, because God has spoken it; and upon His word, faith rests. And it is just here that the devil makes his attack. Upon this point he thought to overcome the Saviour of the world. When Christ had been in the wilderness and had fasted forty days, the tempter came and said to Him, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that the stones be made bread." Matt. 4:3. This was in effect saying to Him, You are not the Son of God; if you are, do something to prove it. And what was the evidence that the Saviour had that He was the Son of God? He had to come to earth and be born a babe in Bethlehem, and we are told that He grew up and developed in mind and physical stature like any other baby that has come into the world. He had been made in all things like unto His brethren in mortal flesh. Heb. 2:17. There was no outward evidence,

nothing that the natural senses could grasp, that He was indeed the Christ. Isaiah had prophesied of Him, "He hath no form nor comeliness" (Isa. 53:2); and when Peter said to Him, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus answered, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." Matt. 16:17.

The Jews looked for a deliverer who would show in his outward appearance that he was of Divine origin, and they did not find him. And when Jesus was alone in the wilderness, at the end of His long fast, weak and emaciated, there was certainly nothing about Him to afford any outward evidence whatever of His Divinity. Under such circumstances it was that the tempter said to Him, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that the stones be made bread;" and the temptation to Christ to doubt, and to do something to prove to Himself that He was indeed the Son of God, must have been very strong.

"If thou be the Son of God." This was one of Satan's strong temptations, and still is. Christ had heard the words from heaven, "This My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and now the devil would make Him doubt them. Everything combined to strengthen the doubt that the devil suggested. Jesus was alone in the wilderness, surrounded by wild beasts, and hungry. No one, not even the members of His own family, understood Him and His work. How natural the thought, "If I were the son of God, I should not be thus forsaken;" but Jesus did not yield to it. He withstood the temptation, that we may also.

There is no temptation that besets us more frequently than this. True we have all the promises of God, and His assurance that He has accepted us in the Beloved, and that He is our Father; yet the enemy will seek to make us believe that the words which we have heard were spoken to somebody else. We have heard the Lord speaking to our souls, but others have not recognized the voice, and so we have been tempted to think that perhaps we were mistaken. Such a suggestion must not be listened to; it is dishonoring to God. To think that He does not care for us, because we are so weak and poor and unworthy, is to charge Him with being like selfish man. The Father is no respecter of persons. Christ, the emaciated and forsaken in the wilderness was as much the Son of God as when on the mount of transfiguration, and He asserted His relationship. To as many as received Him He gives power to become the sons of God. But if He had done as Satan suggested, He would have manifested a lack of

faith. He stood just where we must then,—upon the evidence of faith. God said, “Thou art My beloved Son;” and to have done something to prove to Himself that this was true, would have been doubting God.

As the tempter came to Christ, so he comes to us. God has said, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” 1 John 5:1. But the tempter says, You are not born of God; the appearances are all against it. Look at the sins that you have committed! If you are the son of God, what is your evidence? And just as Christ resisted Satan, so must we resist him; not by essaying to do something or to produce some tangible proof that we are sons of God, but by resting upon the evidence of faith, which grasps the word of God.

The following letter was found in a baking-power can wired to the handle of an old pump that offered the only hope of drinking water on a very long and seldom-used trail across Nevada’s Amargosa Desert: “This pump is all right as of June 1932. I put a new sucker washer into it and it ought to last five years. But the washer dries out and the pump has got to be primed. Under the white rock I buried a bottle of water, out of the sun and cork end up. There’s enough water in it to prime the pump, but not if you drink some first. Pour about one-fourth and let her soak to wet the leather. Then pour in the rest medium fast and pump like crazy. You’ll git water. The well has never run dry. Have faith. When you git watered up, fill the bottle and put it back like you found it for the next feller. (signed) Desert Pete. P.S. Don’t go drinking the water first. Prime the pump with it and you’ll git all you can hold.”

The temptation is to drink all the available water fast and not follow the directions. But believing the words will produce all the water needed.

And faith brings further evidence of our Divine relationship; for when Christ said to the tempter, after the latter had sought to induce Him to worship him, “Get thee hence,” the devil had no power to withstand His word; and he left Him, and angels came and ministered unto Him. His faith gained the victory; and so will it be with us. “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world,” and when we get the victory over the world by faith, it is an evidence of our sonship which the tempter cannot question. “Resist the devil”—resist him “steadfast in the faith”—“and he will flee from you.” “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ”—that is, “confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh”—“is born of God,” and “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our

faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" 1 John 5:5.

Some folks are very much given to telling what they don't believe. Especially is this so with regard to the statements of Scripture. It is fashionable, even in church circles, to doubt some portions of the word of God, and this tendency of the age is constantly becoming more marked. Its effect upon youthful minds is most disastrous. Many a young man today is resting in spiritual apathy, refusing to identify himself with the followers of Christ, because of certain things pertaining to Christianity, or which he fancies pertain to it, which he does not understand, and does not believe to be true. When he thinks of Christianity it is only to think of these doubts. He views it only from a negative side. When these doubts are all cleared away, he will (as he thinks) embrace it. He is patiently waiting for them to be cleared up; but until they are gone he feels justified in remaining where he is.

A course so foolish as this would hardly be taken in anything outside of the realm of our obligations to God. The very worst foundation in the world to stand on is that of doubt. There is no virtue in doubt; it imparts no wisdom, no strength. No man could accomplish anything in any line of physical or mental achievement, working on a basis of what he did not believe. No; it is *faith* that gives power; it is *belief* from which a person draws inspiration for the task before him. It is *conviction* that fills one with energy and nerves one's hands for the successful prosecution of his work.

The ones who have done the most in the world are those who have not been held back by doubt. Who ever undertook a great work that did not involve many difficulties the solution of which was not apparent? Faith in God makes great optimists. Over in Burma, Judson was lying in a foul jail with 32 lbs. of chains on his ankles, his feet bound to a bamboo pole. A fellow prisoner said, "Dr. Judson, what about the prospect of the conversion of the heathen?" with a sneer on his face. His instant reply was, "The prospects are just as bright as the promises of God." No one can see the end from the beginning; he cannot even see with certainty a single hour into the future. The pathway which leads out to the regions beyond, though plain enough where our feet are standing, becomes less and less distinct until, apparently, it is hedged up altogether; but no one turns back on that account. He knows there is an opening through which the path continues on, and that he will see it when he comes to it. He would characterize as extreme folly the idea of standing still and

waiting till he could see the openings all the way, before he proceeded further.

On a recent hike in the mountains I faced a headwall while following a use trail. The trail was marked occasionally by some rocks. At the wall there were some flat stones piled up as a step-up. Then the wall with no handholds. It was about ten feet to the ledge above where the going would be obvious easier. It took faith to use the friction generated by my body weight pressed against the rock where my feet made contact. Sure enough the foothold worked and I was soon on my way. But it took faith in the foothold that it would not slip.

And such it is; and no less so in spiritual things than in things that are temporal and earthly. The truth is, we are surrounded on every side by that which we cannot understand. Look which way we will, we have plenty of chance to doubt. There is no place where we can take our stand and say that everything around us is clear and plain. If we reject the word of God because there are things in it we cannot understand, we only involve ourselves in more doubt; for now we must explain to our satisfaction how many things that come under our notice can be, if the Bible be not true. The phenomena of Christianity—not so-called Christianity, but that which is based upon the Bible—its power, its effect upon the minds and hearts to change men and women, must be explained; and the unbeliever finds himself more in the dark than ever. Accepting the Bible as true, the power which is in the word, and all that history, both sacred and secular, testifies of its power in healing the bodies and the souls of individuals, is easily comprehended; but discarding the sacred word, we only find ourselves compelled to account for all this upon some hypothesis, we know not what.

But those who disbelieve the Scriptures usually shut their eyes to the difficulties in which their unbelief involves them. In getting rid of the word they have released themselves from duties and responsibilities that were disagreeable to self, and this is generally the real thing for which they are seeking. It is much easier to doubt a disagreeable truth than one which involves no sacrifice on our part.

G. Campbell Morgan had already enjoyed some success as a preacher by the time he was 19 years old. But then he was attacked by doubts about the Bible. The writings of various scientists and agnostics disturbed him (e.g., Charles Darwin, John Tyndall, Thomas Huxley, and Herbert Spencer). As he read their books and listened to debates, Morgan became more and more perplexed. What did he

do? He cancelled all preaching engagements, put all the books in a cupboard and locked the door, and went to the bookstore and bought a new Bible. He said to himself, "I am no longer sure that this is what my father claims it to be—the Word of God. But of this I am sure. If it be the Word of God, and if I come to it with an unprejudiced and open mind, it will bring assurance to my soul of itself." The result? "That Bible found me!" said Morgan. The new assurance in 1883 gave him the motivation for his preaching and teaching ministry. He devoted himself to the study and preaching of God's Word.

Look not at your doubts, at what you do not believe, but at what you do believe. Your "don't believes" are of no value, either to yourself or anybody else. It is belief only that contains a positive force. If there is any part of God's word that you do believe, take your stand on that and conform your life to it, and seek to the Author of that for further knowledge. Search not for things to doubt, but for things to believe. Make an advance move; walk out in the light that you have, and you will find your pathway growing brighter and brighter, "unto the perfect day."

Doubt is the most effective weapon in the hands of Satan. When he can lead a person to doubt, it is but an easy step to open transgression of the Divine will. The devil works by persuasion; he is not allowed to work by compulsion. But to persuade the heart he finds it necessary to fill it with doubt. Doubt is the wedge by which he gains access to the human soul.

The apostle writes, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Heb. 3:12. It is unbelief that leads an individual to depart from Him. When Satan came to Christ in the wilderness, he prefaced his temptations by the words, "If thou be the Son of God;" and he prefaced his temptations now also with an "if," not an honorable one perhaps, but one which nevertheless is felt in our hearts. He uses every means to induce doubt,—the evidence of the senses, the evidence of reason, and even of the word of God; for Satan can quote the Bible as readily as anybody, as we find him doing when he tempted Christ. Of course he perverts its meaning, and is always sufficiently erroneous either in his quotation or his application of it to turn it into a lie; but those not versed in the Scriptures are often deceived thereby. Indeed, whenever the devil cannot deceive a person by getting him to trust in his reason or his natural senses for the discernment of spiritual truths, he will assail him with Scripture (in a perverted form, of course), and

then if that person be not grounded in the word of God, he will have nothing to withstand Satan's attack.

We doubt by looking away from God,—by looking away from the Word, which is God manifest in the flesh (1 John 1:1, 14), and letting that Word leak out our hearts. When we look away from God, our finite eyes see nothing but that which would lead us to doubt. We could see nothing in ourselves, in our neighbors, in science, in philosophy, or in any earthly thing to which we may look, that will testify to the truths which pertain to salvation. Their testimony seems to us to be rather in the opposite direction. Darwin and Huxley looked at science; Voltaire at philosophy. The modern skeptic looks at his neighbors and sees their shortcomings, and many others lose their faith by looking at themselves, but he who looks at God, at His glory revealed in the face of His Son Jesus Christ, leaves no avenue open for doubt. Looking always unto Jesus, you will not stumble in running the race that is set before you. Heb. 12:1, 2.

Again, what does it mean to “live under the new covenant,” or the promise of God?

All God's promises were made to the “Seed” (singular), which is Christ (Gal. 3:16), and the only way we come into the picture is “in Christ.” But thank God, that's our “way.”

Christ was known as “the son of David” not only through physical ancestry, but because in His incarnation He “lived” in David's psalms. As the leadership of God's true church condemned Jesus, so the divinely appointed leadership of His true church in the days of King Saul condemned David. Saul was “the anointed of the Lord,” and David's agony was not only the physical exertion of constantly fleeing from Saul but wrestling with the greater temptation to doubt that God had truly anointed *him* to be king of Israel, when “the anointed of the Lord” condemned him. He had to overcome, to *believe* that God would take care of him.

Thus we have David's psalms written during his exile (57, 59, for example); repeatedly, the future king begins by wrestling with fear (old covenant-inspired!), and before the end of the psalm he erupts in new covenant joy of believing that the LORD will not forsake but vindicate him.

A millennium later the Son of God, “sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” which He had taken upon Himself, wrestles with the same temptation. Again He is “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15),

triumphing again over *our* old covenant fears, emerging day by day into new covenant sunlight (cf. Isa. 50:4, 5). This goes on continually in His earthly life until the greatest temptation of all to old covenant unbelief as He hangs on His cross in the darkness crying, “My God, why have You forsaken Me?” And there on the cross He wrestles His way through the darkness into the sunlight of new covenant faith, crying out joyously as His heart was already bleeding to death, “You who fear the Lord, praise Him! . . . He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted [Me!], nor has He hidden His face from Him [Me!], . . . *He heard*”! (Psalm 22:23, 24).

Jesus has taught us how to live without a doubt by faith in God’s promise under the new covenant.