

# How to deal with doubt

Faith comes by hearing the word of God

Compiled by Dr. Harold Bollinger

## Table of Contents

Forward		3
Chapter 1	The beginning of doubt	4
Chapter 2	Doubt as seen in the gospels	13
Chapter 3	Faith in God can move mountains	17
Chapter 4	Abraham wavered not in his faith	22
Chapter 5	Seeing doubt as unbelief	26
Chapter 6	Jesus tell us not to doubt	29

## **Forward**

It is possible to have questions (or doubts) about persons, propositions, or objects.

Doubt has been deemed a valuable element in honest, rational inquiry. It prevents us from reaching hasty conclusions or making commitments to unreliable and untrustworthy sources.

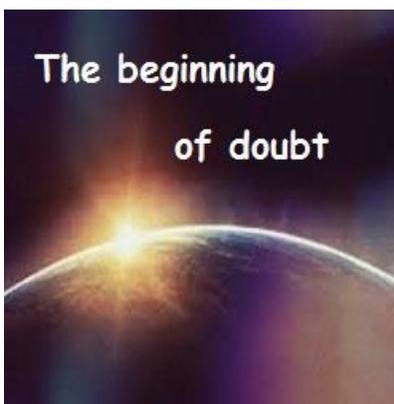
It is sometime used as a suspension of judgment until sufficient inquiry is made and adequate evidence is presented is judged to be admirable. In this light, doubt is not an enemy of faith.

Questioning or doubting motivates us to search further and deeper in an understanding of faith.

Doubt in Scripture is seen as a negative attitude or action because it is directed toward God by man. The word connotes the idea of weakness in faith or unbelief.

Acts 17:11 these were nobler than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

## Chapter 1



### **The beginning of doubt**

Doubt actually began in heaven in the heart of Lucifer. Here the object of doubt (and rejection) was the sovereignty and majesty of God.

Isaiah 14:13-14

For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

On earth doubt was conceived and given birth in the garden when the serpent cast doubt on God's character and goodness.

Pride was Satan's sin as well as Babylon's. Common to all three viewpoints is the truth that pride willfully opposes God and will result in judgment. Israel made the mistake of being too proud to depend on God, and we are vulnerable to that same mistake.

## Genesis 3:1-5

Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the creatures the Lord God had made. "Really?" he asked the woman. "Did God really say you must not eat any of the fruit in the garden?"

"Of course we may eat it," the woman told him. "It's only the fruit from the tree at the center of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God says we must not eat it or even touch it, or we will die."

"You won't die!" the serpent hissed. "God knows that your eyes will be opened when you eat it. You will become just like God, knowing everything, both good and evil."

Disguised as a crafty serpent, Satan came to tempt Eve. Satan at one time was an angel who rebelled against God and was thrown out of heaven. As a created being, Satan has definite limitations.

Although he is trying to tempt everyone away from God, he will not be the final victor. In Genesis 3:14-15, God promises that Satan will be crushed by one of the woman's offspring, the Messiah.

Why does Satan tempt us? Temptation is Satan's invitation to give in to his kind of life and give up on God's kind of life. Satan tempted Eve and succeeded in getting her to sin. Ever since then, he's been busy getting people to sin. He even tempted Jesus (Matthew 4:11). But Jesus did not sin!

How could Eve have resisted temptation? By following the same guidelines we can follow.

First, we must realize that *being tempted* is not a sin. We have not sinned until we *give in* to the temptation.

Then, to resist temptation, we must

- (1) Pray for strength to resist,
- (2) Run, sometimes literally, and
- (3) Say no when confronted with what we know is wrong.

James 1:12 tells of the blessings and rewards for those who don't give in when tempted.

The serpent, Satan, tempted Eve by getting her to doubt God's goodness. He implied that God was strict, stingy, and selfish for not wanting Eve to share his knowledge of good and evil. Satan made Eve forget all that God had given her and, instead, focus on the one thing she couldn't have.

We fall into trouble, too, when we dwell on the few things we don't have rather than on the countless things God has given us.

The next time you are feeling sorry for yourself and what you don't have, consider all you *do* have and thank God. Then your doubts won't lead you into sin.

Tragically Eve and Adam bought into his deceptive plan and plunged humankind into the fall (Genesis 3: 6-19).

## Genesis 3:6-19

The woman was convinced. The fruit looked so fresh and delicious, and it would make her so wise! So she ate some of the fruit. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her. Then he ate it, too. [7] At that moment, their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they strung fig leaves together around their hips to cover themselves.

Toward evening they heard the Lord God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. [9] The Lord God called to Adam, "Where are you?"

He replied, "I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

"Who told you that you were naked?" the Lord God asked. "Have you eaten the fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

"Yes," Adam admitted, "but it was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit, and I ate it."

Then the Lord God asked the woman, "How could you do such a thing?"

"The serpent tricked me," she replied. "That's why I ate it."

So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you will be punished."

You are singled out from all the domestic and wild animals of the whole earth to be cursed. You will grovel in the dust as long as you live, crawling along on your belly.

From now on, you and the woman will be enemies, and your offspring and her offspring will be enemies. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Then he said to the woman, "You will bear children with intense pain and suffering. And though your desire will be for your husband, he will be your master."

And to Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate the fruit I told you not to eat, I have placed a curse on the ground. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it.

It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. All your life you will sweat to produce food, until your dying day. Then you will return to the ground from which you came. For you were made from dust, and to the dust you will return."

Doubt is clearly an aspect of sin; it is directed toward God and is characterized by rebellion and disobedience.

Satan tried to make Eve think that sin is good, pleasant, and desirable. A knowledge of both good and evil seemed harmless to her. People usually choose wrong things because they have become convinced that those things are good, at least for themselves. Our sins do not always appear ugly to us, and the pleasant sins are the hardest to avoid. So

prepare yourself for the attractive temptations that may come your way. We cannot always prevent temptation, but there is always a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). Use God's Word and God's people to help you stand against it.

Notice what Eve did: She looked, she took, she ate, and she gave. The battle is often lost at the first look.

Temptation often begins by simply seeing something you want. Are you struggling with temptation because you have not learned that looking is the first step toward sin? You would win over temptation more often if you followed Paul's advice to run from those things that produce evil thoughts (2 Tim. 2:22).

One of the realities of sin is that its effects spread. After Eve sinned, she involved Adam in her wrongdoing. When we do something wrong, often we try to relieve our guilt by involving someone else. Like toxic waste spilled in a river, sin swiftly spreads. Recognize and confess your sin to God before you are tempted to pollute those around you.

After sinning, Adam and Eve felt guilt and embarrassment over their nakedness. Their guilty feelings made them try to hide from God. A guilty conscience is a warning signal God placed inside you that goes off when you've done wrong.

The worst step you could take is to eliminate the guilty feelings without eliminating the cause. That would be like using a painkiller but not treating the disease. Be glad those guilty feelings are there. They make you aware of your sin so you can ask God's forgiveness and then correct your wrongdoing.

The thought of two humans covered with fig leaves trying to hide from the all-seeing, all-knowing God is humorous. How could they be so silly as to think they could actually hide?

Yet we do the same, acting as though God doesn't know what we're doing. Have the courage to share all you do and think with him. And don't try to hide—it can't be done. Honesty will strengthen your relationship with God.

These verses show God's desire to have fellowship with us. They also show why we are afraid to have fellowship with him.

Adam and Eve hid from God when they heard him approaching. God wanted to be with them, but because of their sin they were afraid to show themselves. Sin had broken their close relationship with God, just as it has broken ours.

But Jesus Christ, God's Son, opens the way for us to renew our fellowship with him. God longs to be with us. He actively offers us his unconditional love. Our natural response is fear because we feel we can't live up to his standards. But understanding that he loves us, regardless of our faults, can help remove that dread.

Adam and Eve failed to heed God's warning recorded in Genesis 2:16-17. They did not understand the reasons for his command, so they chose to act in another way that looked better to them. All of God's commands are for our own good, but we may not always understand the reasons behind them.

People who trust God will obey because God asks them to, whether or not they understand why God commands it.

When God asked Adam about his sin, Adam blamed Eve. Then Eve blamed the serpent. How easy it is to excuse our sins by blaming someone else or circumstances.

But God knows the truth, and he holds each of us responsible for what we do (see Genesis 3:14-19).

Admit your wrong attitudes and actions and apologize to God. Don't try to get away with sin by blaming someone else.

Adam and Eve chose their course of action (disobedience), and then God chose his. As a holy God, he could respond only in a way consistent with his perfect moral nature.

He could not allow sin to go unchecked; he had to punish it. If the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin seem extreme, remember that their sin set in motion the world's tendency toward disobeying God. That is why we sin today: Every human being ever born, with the exception of Jesus, has inherited the sinful nature of Adam and Eve (Romans 5:12-21).

Adam and Eve's punishment reflects how seriously God views sin of any kind.

Adam and Eve learned by painful experience that because God is holy and hates sin, he must punish sinners. The rest of the book of Genesis recounts painful stories of lives ruined as a result of the fall. Disobedience is sin, and it breaks our fellowship with God.

But, fortunately, when we disobey, God is willing to forgive us and to restore our relationship with him.

Satan is our enemy. He will do anything he can to get us to follow his evil, deadly path. The phrase "you will strike his heel" refers to Satan's repeated attempts to defeat Christ during his life on earth.

"He will crush your head" foreshadows Satan's defeat when Christ rose from the dead. A strike on the heel is not deadly, but a crushing blow to the head is.

Already God was revealing his plan to defeat Satan and offer salvation to the world through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Adam and Eve's disobedience and fall from God's gracious presence affected all creation, including the environment.

Years ago people thought nothing of polluting streams with chemical wastes and garbage. This seemed so insignificant, so small.

Now we know that just two or three parts per million of certain chemicals can damage human health.

Sin in our lives is similar to pollution in streams. Even small amounts are deadly.

## Chapter 2



### **Doubt as seen in the Gospels**

In the Gospels the word "doubt" consistently carries with it a negative aspect, and the object of doubt again is always the Lord in some sense.

#### **Peter doubted Christ's ability to keep him from drowning**

Matthew 13:31

Here is another illustration Jesus used: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field.

Doubt is used here as small or weak faith. Peter became doubtful as to the Lord's reliability and power to sustain him.

The mustard seed was the smallest seed a farmer used. Jesus used this parable to show that the kingdom has small beginnings but will grow and produce great results.

### **The Pharisees doubted Christ's Messiahship**

Matthew 12:38-42

One day some teachers of religious law and Pharisees came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, we want you to show us a miraculous sign to prove that you are from God."

But Jesus replied, "Only an evil, faithless generation would ask for a miraculous sign; but the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah.

For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so I, the Son of Man, will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

The people of Nineveh will rise up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah. And now someone greater than Jonah is here—and you refuse to repent.

The queen of Sheba will also rise up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, because she came from a distant land to hear the

wisdom of Solomon. And now someone greater than Solomon is here—and you refuse to listen to him.

The Pharisees were asking for another miraculous sign, but they were not sincerely seeking to know Jesus.

Jesus knew they had already seen enough miraculous proof to convince them that he was the Messiah if they would just open their hearts. But they had already decided not to believe in him, and more miracles would not change that.

Many people have said, “If I could just see a real miracle, then I could really believe in God.” But Jesus’ response to the Pharisees applies to us. We have plenty of evidence—Jesus’ birth, death, resurrection, and ascension, and centuries of his work in believers around the world.

Instead of looking for additional evidence or miracles, accept what God has already given and move forward. He may use your life as evidence to reach another person.

Jonah was a prophet sent to the Assyrian city of Nineveh (see the book of Jonah). Because Assyria was such a cruel and warlike nation, Jonah tried to run from his assignment and ended up spending three days in the belly of a huge fish.

When Jonah got out, he grudgingly went to Nineveh, preached God’s message, and saw the city repent. By contrast, when Jesus came to his people, they refused to repent. Here Jesus is clearly saying that his resurrection will prove he is the Messiah.

Three days after his death Jesus will come back to life, just as Jonah was given a new chance at life after three days in the fish.

In Jonah's day, Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire, and it was as powerful as it was evil (Jonah 1:2). But the entire city repented at Jonah's preaching.

The Queen of the South traveled far to see Solomon, king of Israel, and learn about his great wisdom (1 Kings 10:1-10; also see the note on ■Luke 11:31-32 for more on the Queen of Sheba).

These Gentiles recognized the truth about God when it was presented to them, unlike the religious leaders who ignored the truth even though it stared them in the face. How have you responded to the evidence and truth that you have?

## Chapter 3



### Faith in God can move mountains

If we have faith in God and do not doubt, we can move mountains and receive our request through prayer

Matthew 21:21

Then Jesus told them, "I assure you, if you have faith and don't doubt, you can do things like this and much more. You can even say to this mountain, 'May God lift you up and throw you into the sea,' and it will happen.

Many have wondered about Jesus' statement that if we have faith and don't doubt, we can move mountains. Jesus, of course, was not suggesting that his followers use prayer as "magic" and perform capricious "mountain-moving" acts. Instead, he was making a strong point about the disciples' (and our) lack of faith.

What kinds of mountains do you face? Have you talked to God about them? How strong is your faith?

Mark 11:23

I assure you that you can say to this mountain, 'May God lift you up and throw you into the sea,' and your command will be obeyed. All that's required is that you really believe and do not doubt in your heart.

The kind of prayer that moves mountains is prayer for the fruitfulness of God's kingdom. It would seem impossible to move a mountain into the sea, so Jesus used that picture to say that God can do anything. God will answer your prayers, but not as a result of your positive mental attitude.

Other conditions must be met:

- (1) You must be a believer;
- (2) You must not hold a grudge against another person;
- (2) You must not pray with selfish motives;
- (3) Your request must be for the good of God's kingdom.

To pray effectively, you need faith in God, not faith in the object of your request. If you focus only on your request, you will be left with nothing if your request is refused.

Jesus, our example for prayer, prayed, "Everything is possible for you. . . Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36).

Our prayers are often motivated by our own interests and desires. We like to hear that we can have anything. But Jesus prayed with *God's* interests in mind. When we pray, we should express our desires, but want his will above ours. Check yourself to see if your prayers focus on your interests or God's.

## **Doubt is the antithesis of faith.**

John 14:1

"Don't be troubled. You trust God, now trust in me.

Jesus encourages the disciples to not have a troubled (doubting?) heart with regards to the future, but to believe in him, to trust him for their future needs.

## **Some doubted the reality of the resurrected Lord**

Luke 24:38

"Why are you frightened?" he asked. "Why do you doubt who I am?"

Jesus' body wasn't just a figment of the imagination or the appearance of a ghost—the disciples touched him, and he ate food. On the other hand, his body wasn't merely a restored human body like Lazarus's (John 11)—he was able to appear and disappear.

Jesus' resurrected body was immortal. This is the kind of body we will be given at the resurrection of the dead (see 1 Cor. 15:42-50).

Jesus' body wasn't just a figment of the imagination or the appearance of a ghost—the disciples touched him, and he ate food. On the other hand, his body wasn't merely a restored human body like Lazarus's

(John 11)—he was able to appear and disappear. Jesus' resurrected body was immortal. This is the kind of body we will be given at the resurrection of the dead (see 1 Cor. 15:42-50).

Have you ever wished you could actually see Jesus, touch him, and hear his words? Are there times you want to sit down with him and get his advice? Thomas wanted Jesus' physical presence. But God's plan is wiser.

He has not limited himself to one physical body; he wants to be present with you at all times. Even now he is with you in the form of the Holy Spirit. You can talk to him, and you can find his words to you in the pages of the Bible. He can be as real to you as he was to Thomas.

Jesus wasn't hard on Thomas for his doubts. Despite his skepticism, Thomas was still loyal to the believers and to Jesus himself. Some people need to doubt before they believe.

If doubt leads to questions, questions lead to answers, and the answers are accepted, then doubt has done good work. It is when doubt becomes stubbornness and stubbornness becomes a life-style that doubt harms faith. When you doubt, don't stop there. Let your doubt deepen your faith as you continue to search for the answer.

Jesus' resurrected body was unique. It was not the same kind of flesh and blood Lazarus had when he came back to life. Jesus' body was no longer subject to the same laws of nature as before his death.

He could appear in a locked room; yet he was not a ghost or apparition because he could be touched and could eat. Jesus' resurrection was *literal* and *physical*—he was not a disembodied spirit.

Some people think they would believe in Jesus if they could see a definite sign or miracle. But Jesus says we are blessed if we can believe

without seeing. We have all the proof we need in the words of the Bible and the testimony of believers. A physical appearance would not make Jesus any more real to us than he is now.

### **Thomas sees and believes**

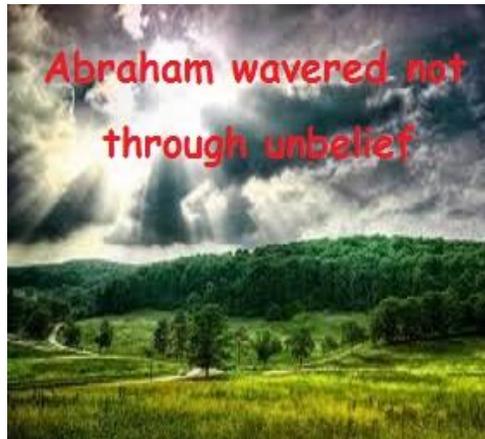
John 20:27

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!"

Doubt is not used here as an outright denial or unbelief, but an attitude or feeling of uncertainty. Thomas is not severely rebuked, but nor is his skepticism commended. "Stop doubting and believe" is the word of the Lord to his disciple.

Jesus' resurrected body was unique. It was not the same kind of flesh and blood Lazarus had when he came back to life. Jesus' body was no longer subject to the same laws of nature as before his death. He could appear in a locked room; yet he was not a ghost or apparition because he could be touched and could eat. Jesus' resurrection was *literal* and *physical*—he was not a disembodied spirit.

## Chapter 4



### **Abraham wavered not through unbelief**

Abraham, as a positive example, is said not to have wavered" through unbelief [doubt] regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith"

Romans 4:20

Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. Doubt here is equivalent to unbelief.

Abraham never doubted that God would fulfill his promise. Abraham's life was marked by mistakes, sins, and failures as well as by wisdom and goodness, but he consistently trusted God.

His faith was strengthened by the obstacles he faced, and his life was an example of faith in action. If he had looked only at his own resources for subduing Canaan and founding a nation, he would have given up in despair. But Abraham looked to God, obeyed him, and waited for God to fulfill his word.

### **A doubting man lacks faith to lay hold of God's promises**

James 1:6-8

But when you ask him, be sure that you really expect him to answer, for a doubtful mind is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

People like that should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. They can't make up their minds. They waver back and forth in everything they do.

### **A doubting man is like a wave of the sea.**

Unlike the God who does not change, the doubting person is "like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind". Such an individual "should not think he will receive anything from the Lord".

A different use of the word "doubt" is found in both Romans 14:23 and Jude 22.

Romans 14:23

But if people have doubts about whether they should eat something, they shouldn't eat it. They would be condemned for not acting in faith before God. If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning.

Doubt here is related to one's conscience.

Doubt or uncertainty over a questionable action or a "gray area" of the Christian life (here it is eating idol-meat) is condemned because the action does not arise out of faith toward God. At this point the latter part of verse 23 is most instructive: "everything that does not come from faith is sin."

We try to steer clear of actions forbidden by Scripture, of course, but sometimes Scripture is silent.

Then we should follow our consciences. "Everything that does not come from faith is sin" means that to go against a conviction will leave a person with a guilty or uneasy conscience.

When God shows us that something is wrong for us, we should avoid it. But we should not look down on other Christians who exercise their freedom in those areas.

### **When faith is wavering**

Jude 22

Show mercy to those whose faith is wavering.

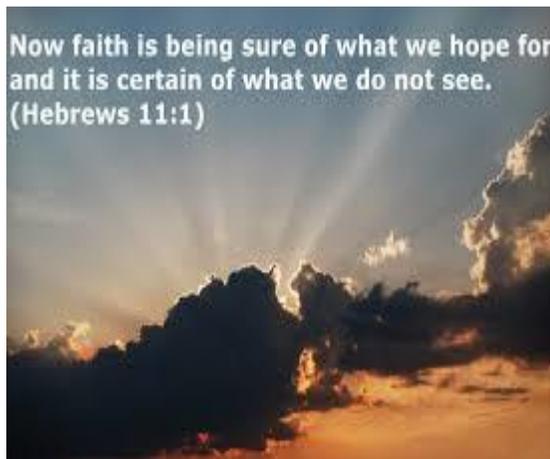
Here doubt is a settled denial and rejection of both the person (Jesus Christ) and propositions affirmed about him (he is sovereign and Lord).

Effective witnessing saves people from God's judgment.

We witness to some through our compassion and kindness; to others we witness as if we were snatching them from the eternal fire. To hate “even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh” means that we are to hate the sin, but we must witness to and love the sinner. Unbelievers, no matter how successful they seem by worldly standards, are lost and in need of salvation. We should not take witnessing lightly—it is a matter of life and death.

In trying to find common ground with those to whom we witness, we must be careful not to fall into the quicksand of compromise. When reaching out to others, we must be sure that our own footing is safe and secure. Be careful not to become so much like non-Christians that no one can tell who you are or what you believe. Influence them for Christ—don’t allow them to influence you to sin!

## Chapter 5



### Seeing doubt as unbelief

Mark 9:24

Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!”

The attitude of trust and confidence that the Bible calls *belief* or *faith* (Hebrews 11:1, 6) is not something we can obtain without help. Faith is a gift from God (Ephes. 2:8-9).

No matter how much faith we have, we never reach the point of being self-sufficient. Faith is not stored away like money in the bank. Growing in faith is a constant process of daily renewing our trust in Jesus.

Matthew 13:58

And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

Jesus did few miracles in his hometown “because of their lack of faith.” Lack of faith blinds people to the truth and robs them of hope. These people missed the Messiah. How does your faith measure up? If you can’t see God’s work, perhaps it is because of your unbelief. Believe, ask God for a mighty work in your life, and expect him to act. Look with the eyes of faith.

Mark 6:6

And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching.

Jesus could have done greater miracles in Nazareth, but he chose not to because of the people’s pride and unbelief. The miracles he did had little effect on the people because they did not accept his message or believe that he was from God. Therefore, Jesus looked elsewhere, seeking those who would respond to his miracles and message.

Mark 16:14

Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.

Jesus told his disciples to go into all the world, telling everyone that he had paid the penalty for sin and that those who believe in him can be forgiven and live eternally with God. Christian disciples today in all parts of the world are preaching this gospel to people who haven’t heard about Christ.

The driving power that carries missionaries around the world and sets Christ’s church in motion is the faith that comes from the resurrection.

Do you ever feel as though you don't have the skill or determination to be a witness for Christ? You must personally realize that Jesus rose from the dead and lives for you today. As you grow in your relationship with Christ, he will give you both the opportunities and the inner strength to tell his message.

Mark 16:16

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

It is not the water of baptism that saves, but God's grace accepted through faith in Christ. Because of Jesus' response to the criminal on the cross who died with him, we know it is possible to be saved without being baptized (Luke 23:43). Baptism alone, without faith, does not automatically bring a person to heaven. Those who refuse to believe will be condemned, regardless of whether or not they have been baptized.

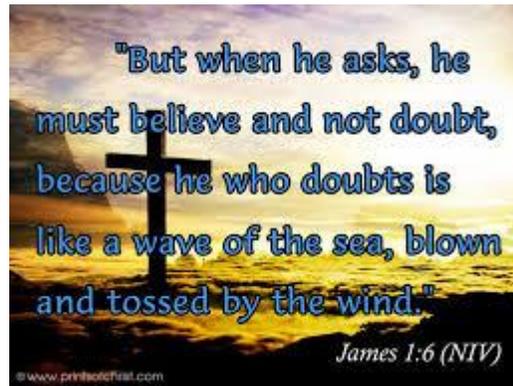
Romans 11:20

That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.

Speaking to Gentile Christians, Paul warns them not to feel superior because God rejected some Jews. Abraham's faith is like the root of a productive tree, and the Jewish people are the tree's natural branches. Because of faithlessness, the Jews were the broken branches.

Gentile believers have been grafted into the tree like a wild olive shoot. Both Jews and Gentiles share the tree's nourishment based on faith in God; neither can rest on heritage or culture for salvation.

## Chapter 6



**Jesus tells us not to doubt.**

Matthew 14:31

Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”

Although we start out with good intentions, sometimes our faith falters. This doesn't necessarily mean we have failed. When Peter's faith faltered, he reached out to Christ, the only one who could help. He was afraid, but he still looked to Christ.

When you are apprehensive about the troubles around you and doubt Christ's presence or ability to help, you must remember that he is the *only* one who can really help.

## **One must not doubt in his heart.**

Mark 11:23

Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.

Fig trees, a popular source of inexpensive food in Israel, require three years from the time they are planted until they can bear fruit. Each tree yields a great amount of fruit twice a year, in late spring and in early autumn. This incident occurred early in the spring fig season when the leaves were beginning to bud. The figs normally grow as the leaves fill out, but this tree, though full of leaves, had none. The tree looked promising but offered no fruit. Jesus’ harsh words to the fig tree could be applied to the nation of Israel. Fruitful in appearance only, Israel was spiritually barren.

## **Dealing with a lack of faith**

Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Believing that God exists is only the beginning; even the demons believe that much (James 2:19-20). God will not settle for mere acknowledgment of his existence. He wants a personal, dynamic relationship with you that will transform your life. Those who seek God will find that they are rewarded with his intimate presence.

Sometimes we wonder about the fate of those who haven't heard of Christ and have not even had a Bible to read. God assures us that all who honestly seek him—who act in faith on the knowledge of God that they possess—will be rewarded. When you tell others the gospel, encourage them to be honest and diligent in their search for truth. Those who hear the gospel are responsible for what they have heard (see 2 Cor. 6:1-2).

Mark 4:40

He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”

The disciples panicked because the storm threatened to destroy them all, and Jesus seemed unaware and unconcerned. Theirs was a physical storm, but storms come in other forms. Think about the storms in your life—the situations that cause you great anxiety.

Whatever your difficulty, you have two options: You can worry and assume that Jesus no longer cares, or you can resist fear, putting your trust in him. When you feel like panicking, confess your need for God and then trust him to care for you.

Matthew 8:26

And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. Doubt is one area that we all struggle with at times. Doubt seems to be part of faith though.

If we never have any doubts, then maybe we are not being stretched in our faith in any ways. God never asks us to put all reason aside to follow him. Causing you to doubt God, cry out to God. He is faithful. He will never leave or forsake you.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation  
Holy Bible: New Living Bible translation.

Additional comments and charts are taken from:

*Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois:

Tyndale House 2007. Print