

## Doubt

One of my great burdens in ministry is to be a help and blessing to everyone, especially those like myself who were reared in Christian homes and are embarrassed to confess that there have been times we have had doubts. There is no need to become fearful that you may have committed the unpardonable sin. Doubt is not denying God's existence or the salvation He provides; it is belief that asks questions, not to aid unbelief, but to convince themselves that they believe what they confess to believe. Perhaps for some of you, this doubt has become a storm that has rocked your proverbial boat. Let us claim Isaiah 30:15 before we go further, *"For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength..."* (Isaiah 30:15).

A Christian places a premium on the absolute truth and trustworthiness of God, his goal is to align his or her thinking process to the same criteria of truth. Pilate asked Jesus, *"...What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all"* (John 18:38). Did you notice Pilate does not give Jesus an opportunity to answer? We as the followers of Jesus desire with all of our hearts to know truth and furthermore, we search the Scriptures to find the answers. We do not believe that because we are disciples of Christ we must leave our brain outside the church or our belief system. I appreciate what the ancient Augustine said, *"Not only does a Christian believe, he is a person who thinks in believing and believes in thinking."*

In my personal library, I treasure a book by Os Guinness on doubt, now republished under a new title: *God in the Dark: The Assurance of Faith Beyond a Shadow of Doubt* (Crossway, 1996). He tells of being reared up in China as a missionaries' kid and observing a peasant beating his poor donkey. He says, "The peasant was walking behind, driving his donkey on. Huge bales of firewood were strapped to its back, but the donkey forced its way up the steep little path that served as a village street. Gradually it slowed, exhausted. Spurred on again by a stream of oaths, it staggered a few paces further and sank to the ground, defeated. It was then that the peasant beat it - and beat it and beat it again. How many Christians treat faith like that? Believe this! Believe that! Stop doubting and believe more firmly! Admonitions and warnings are piled onto faith's back until it can take no more. Cajoling then gives way to threats

lieve our doubts. My aim in Pastor's Word today is that you would believe your beliefs and doubt your doubts. What is doubt as we find it in the Bible and how do we deal with it?

### **1. Doubt is being in two minds.**

In Mark 11:23 Jesus said, *“For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.”*

The Greek word for doubt is “*διακρίνω*” (diakrino) which means to separate thoroughly, i.e. (literally and reflexively) to withdraw from, or (by implication) oppose; figuratively, to discriminate (by implication, decide), or (reflexively) hesitate, contend, doubt, judge, stagger, waver. It is a meaning that expresses an inner state of mind so torn between various options that it cannot make up its mind. James 1: 6 and 8 says it like this: *“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed...A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”* The word “wavereth” is again from the word “*διακρίνω*” (diakrino) and the word “double-minded” is translated from the word “*δίψυχος*” (dipsukos) which means two-spirited (chronically double-minded) i.e. vacillating (in opinion or purpose).

Our English word "doubt" comes from the Latin “*dubitare*” which is rooted in an Aryan word meaning "two." So we can start by defining our terms like this: to believe is to be “in one mind” about accepting something as true; to disbelieve is to be “in another mind” about rejecting it. To doubt is to waver between the two, to believe and disbelieve at once and so to be “in two minds.”

This two-ness or double-ness is the nerve center of doubt and represents our deepest dilemma about it. The heart of doubt is a divided heart. This is not just a metaphor; it is the essence of the Christian view of doubt. Human language and experience from all around the world also bear it out.

In English, the double-ness is pictured in phrases such as “having a foot in both camps.” Os Guinness points out, “There are many equivalents in other languages. The Chinese picture of irresolution is humorous as well as graphic. They speak of a person “having a foot in two boats.” In the Purvian Andes the Huanco Quechuas speak of “having two thoughts” and the Shipibos further to

*them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.”*

(Psalm 25:14). Think about this until we talk on these lines next time. We do not understand to believe; we believe to understand. We set our love upon God; believe Him through the doubts and He will reward us with confidence and assurance. Paul's intense prayer was: "That I may know him..." (Philippians 3:10). Let's make that our prayer as well.

-Pastor Pope-