

Doubt, The Faith Killer

“Lord help my unbelief.” (Mark 9:24)

Surely the greatest desire of anyone seeking a closer walk with the Lord is to have less doubt and a stronger faith. How often I shake my head for being so slow to trust the Lord despite the many clear promises He has given us. God remains perfectly faithful even when our faith is weak. Why can't we have faith like Abraham and just believe what God says? We all know very well that God is unchanging and never lies. He is always true to His word but when things get tough we think His promises are for those other Christians, the strong ones. When the going is smooth we feel that we can move mountains but when there is a bump in the road we doubt and want to drive around it or let someone else do the driving. We need to strap ourselves in and trust God to do the driving.

Poor memory is a faith killer. If we had instant recall of all the times God has been there for us we would be giants in the faith and would never waiver when challenged. God deals with us in both the big and the small things of life and this can be readily seen in our daily walk but when our faith is challenged we seem to forget all the loving attention that He previously poured into our lives. I am sure that David never forgot the great moment of faith in which he defeated Goliath but the average Christian doesn't have unforgettable moments like that. Even so, God proves His faithfulness to each and every one of us in a thousand ways but we choose to forget these things and seem to prefer to doubt when challenged, especially when challenged in a new area.

It's easy to see why Abraham is the father of our faith. We are told in Rom. 4:18-22 that even though Sarah's womb was dead, against all hope his faith didn't waver but was strengthened; he was fully persuaded that God had the power to give him a son through Sarah, just as promised. It was because of this faith that he was declared righteous. If that was not enough, when God told him to sacrifice his son he once again didn't waver but set out the very next morning to sacrifice Isaac believing that God would raise his son from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19). Whatever doubt may have entered Abraham's head, he dismissed it and took God at His word. That's the confident faith God wants from us.

Faith is not something we can get at the store and put in our pocket for later use. It's a state of being, a state of mind, that only comes through actively rejecting doubt and taking God at His word. God wants us to walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had. Just as God gave Abraham certain promises that he believed and acted on, the Bible is full of promises for us to believe and act on. For our faith to be as real as Abraham's, we need to walk in his footsteps by putting doubt aside, believing and acting on the promises God has given us.

One of God's names is Jehovah Jireh, our Provider, but believing in God for the necessities of life can be challenging despite the clear promises. When we have a few dollars in the bank we feel pretty secure and (hopefully) generous in our giving. However, if our bank balance gets a bit low, our giving may be the first thing to get the chop. That really is cutting off the hand that feeds us. In Matt. 6:25-34, Jesus tells us that we are more valuable than the birds God feeds and the lilies He clothes so why should we, His children, doubt His provision? Jesus tells us not to worry about tomorrow but to *“seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”* He also promises that those who have left home, family and fields for full time service will receive these things one hundred times over in this present age (Mark 10:28-30). If we want to honour God and grow in our faith then rather than doubting we must not only believe these promises but act on them by trusting and not worrying.

A time may well come when we will be severely tested by heavy persecution, even martyrdom. If we are not solidly grounded in Jesus and the promise that He is always with us then persecution will bring about great doubt and we may fall away. 1 Pet. 1:6-7 tell us, *“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”* From these verses we can see that God uses trials to test and prove our faith. If we are not trusting Jesus for courage and strength then doubt and fear may overwhelm us and cause us to fall away, showing that our faith was not genuine. We must be well grounded in God's promises and have a close walk with Jesus if we want to have the strength to endure severe persecution.

Doubt will prevent us from hearing God. In James 1:5-8 we are told that God generously gives wisdom to all those who ask and we must believe this rather than doubt because those who doubt are unstable and will not receive anything from the Lord. So when we ask God something we should listen and believe what He places on our mind and act on it. I can remember asking God about a particular situation and didn't like what He placed on my mind so I told myself it was from the Devil and ignored it. It was quite some time later that I realised that when we talk to God He won't let the Devil reply for Him. That is why James tells us that when we ask for wisdom, believe and don't doubt as God gives wisdom generously to all and He won't let the Devil answer our prayers.

God challenges our doubting hearts in various ways to bring us to maturity in the faith. James 1:2-4 say, *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”* It's only when we cast doubt aside and persevere through various trials that we mature and grow stronger in our faith. So, when we are next challenged, let's dismiss all doubt and believe God's promises just like Abraham did. We can be sure that God will never fail us. Amen.

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