

# DOUBT

- I. Biblical references to "doubt."
  - A. Greek word *distazo* - from *dis* meaning twice or double.  
Matt. 14:31 - (to Peter) "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"  
Matt. 28:17 - (disciples) "they worshipped Him, but some were doubtful."
  - B. Greek word *diakrino* - *dia* = through; *krino* = to judge, determine  
Matt. 21:21 - "if you have faith, and do not doubt"  
Mark 11:23 - "does not doubt, but believes..."  
Rom. 14:23 - "he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because not from faith"  
James 1:6 - "ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind."  
Jude 1:22 - "have mercy on some, who are doubting."
  - C. Greek word *dialogismos* - *dia* = through; *logizomai* = to reckon, consider  
Luke 24:38 - "why do doubts arise in your minds?"
  - D. Greek word *diaporeo* - *dia* = through; *aporeo* = perplexed (KJV)  
Acts 2:12 - "they continued in amazement and great perplexity"  
Acts 10:17 - "Peter was greatly perplexed in mind"  
Acts 10:20 - "accompany them without misgivings"
- II. Defining "doubt."
  - A. English word derived from Latin *dubitare* or *dubius* from which we get "dubious."
  - B. Two different concepts of "doubt."
    1. Unbelief, disbelief, rejection, denial, agnosticism, faithlessness.
      - a. "Cartesian doubt" begins by doubting all things, but refuses to doubt its doubts.
      - b. Skeptics and scoffers begin with contempt and derision to prove their preconceived unbelief.
    2. Uncertainty, lack of confidence, reservation, problematic, misgivings, skeptical, questioning, wavering, indeterminate.
- III. Faith and doubt.
  - A. Differentiating between belief and faith. Greek word *pistis*.
    1. Belief – Mental assent, cognitive acceptance, dogmatic assertion comprising intellectual certainty. (static)
    2. Faith – Volitional receptivity and availability allowing for functional certainty of God's activity. (dynamic)
  - B. Relating doubt to belief and faith.
    1. Belief and doubt.
      - a. The intellectual certainty of mental belief does not allow for unbelief, rejection or denial.
      - b. The intellectual certainty of mental belief does not allow for the uncertainty of questioning, reservations or misgivings.
        - (1) This is the basis of fundamentalism, fideism, credulity and "blind faith."
    2. Faith and doubt.
      - a. The functional certainty of receptive faith is founded upon belief in God, and therefore not functional when there is unbelief and rejection of God.
      - b. The functional certainty of receptive faith is not functional if we consider it impossible, unlikely or doubtful that God will function faithfully and sufficiently in accord with who He is.

- (1) The divided mind or double-mindedness of doubt affirms belief in God (a), but questions God's character or ability (b).
  - (2) Most of the New Testament references pertain to such double-mindedness.
- c. The functional certainty of receptive faith allows for mental and emotional questioning, reservations and uncertainty.
- (1) When we are living by faith that is receptive and available to God's function in our lives:
    - We don't know where God is taking us into the unknown and uncharted territory.
    - We don't know where this adventure will end.
    - We don't know what God will do next.
    - We don't know how God is going to work this out.
    - We don't know when this situation will be settled.
    - We don't know why God is allowing this circumstance or why God is acting as He does.
  - (2) The situation where we find ourselves is indeterminate and problematic. We are questioning, uncertain and perplexed. We are forced to recognize our inadequacy, inability and our own lack of faith as we remain receptive to God's activity.
    - Mk. 9:24 - "I believe; help my unbelief."
    - Jude 1:22 - "have mercy on some who are doubting"
  - (3) God is big enough and understanding enough to accept our doubts, to convince us and assure us of His character and sufficiency, and to bring us along to increased faith.

#### IV. Quotations about "doubt."

- A. Chinese proverb - "With great doubts come great understanding; with little doubts come little understanding."
- B. French proverb - "Only the one who knows nothing doubts nothing."
- C. Blaise Pascal - "One must know when it is right to doubt, to affirm, to submit. Anyone who does otherwise does not understand the force of reason."
- D. Francis Bacon - "If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties."
- E. Martin Luther - "Knowledge and doubt are inseparable to man. The sole alternative to "knowledge-with-doubt" is no knowledge at all. Only God and certain madmen have no doubts!"
- F. Alfred Lord Tennyson - "There lives more faith in honest doubt, Believe me, than in half the creeds."
- G. George MacDonald - "Doubt can be a tool in God's hand wielded, in the lives of those who allow it, for the strengthening, not the destruction of faith."
- H. C. S. Lewis - "If ours is an examined faith, we should be unafraid to doubt. If doubt is eventually justified, we were believing what clearly was not worth believing. But if doubt is answered, our faith has grown stronger. It knows God more certainly and it can enjoy God more deeply."