

## INNER PEACE #3

### The problem of doubt

(Luke 7:18-23)

Intro: There are all kinds of things that can rob us of inner peace. Doubt can destroy our inner peace. By that I mean that there may be lingering uncertainties about the truthfulness of things we believe. People will often say to us, "Trust God and everything will work out!" That really doesn't help. We know that we ought to believe; but there may still linger unresolved questions in our minds. There are difficulties that get in the way of faith and it is struggling with these difficulties that destroys our inner peace.

How can we overcome doubt and restore inner peace? For an answer, let's turn to Luke 7:18-23.

### TAKING A LOOK AT THE EXPERIENCE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

*Notice the question of John--"Are you the coming one?!" That question, implies some measure of doubt on John's part. Here's why:*

John had been given a way to know who the Christ was. John had testified that Jesus was that person.

*"And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'*

*"And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." (John 1:33-34)*

So why ask, "Are you the one coming?" John's question reveals that he needed assurance.

***John's circumstances may have prompted his doubt.***

This great man of God had converted hundreds, perhaps thousands. Jesus testified to his greatness (Lk. 7:24-28); and yet in spite of this tremendous service, John had been put into prison by Herod.

*But when Herod the tetrarch was reproved by him on account of Herodias, his brother's wife, and on account of all the wicked things which Herod had done, he added this also to them all, that he locked John up in prison. (Luke 3:19-20)*

Can you imagine the kinds of things John was thinking? How could God allow a prophet such as me to be put in prison? Why has Jesus not brought deliverance to God's people rather than allow this tyrant to continue to oppress the righteous?

***John's experience affords us to important lessons about doubt.***

All people can have doubts!

**If a man as great in faith as John had doubts, then we should not be surprised when we do. Having these doubt should not cause us to panic or abandon faith. John did the right thing--look for assurance!**

Doubt can be accentuated by physical circumstances.

**Life can have a grueling effect upon us all. All of us have our "prison" like John. As we grow older we face new challenges to faith. We think we are strong; that we have overcome the most difficult temptations of life while young only to discover that as we grow older our patience and faith is tested by the many difficulties and responsibilities of life. You may discover that doubts arise most often when life is difficult.**

God may sometimes act in ways that we may not think he "ought" to. **We may be disappointed or confused by His actions toward us.**

### **HOW JESUS RESPONDED TO JOHN'S DOUBTS**

*Jesus gave John evidence for His faith!*

"Tell John what you see and hear." (v. 21-22)

**Jesus was performing astounding and powerful miracles. There was no area of physical infirmity that he did not handle. Even death itself was under his control. That was the evidence of who he was!—divine power was at work in Him!**

**But in addition, Jesus expressed a concern for the lost that identified him with God. "The poor have the gospel preached to them". This said volumes about Jesus. Was He a charlatan who hoped to bilk the masses of their wealth? If so, why preach to those who could give him nothing? Was he looking for power? Why preach to those who had none? The fact that Jesus preached to the poor indicated that he was the Christ (Is. 61:1ff).**

When doubts arise, we do not need to look for some new or stupendous confirmation of faith.

**Don't you secretly wish sometimes that God would just once appear and say something? Give us some great sign to draw us back to him? Jesus didn't do that for John. He won't do that for us.**

When doubts arise, we do need to revisit the evidence God as given us.

**What we need to do is to get the Bible out and read about Jesus. We need to be challenged with his life. We need to ponder well the questions his life raises for the modern intelligent mind: We possess a book that has come to us through the sacrifice of human blood! The witnesses of Jesus willingly gave their lives first to believe and then to tell the story of Jesus! Why did they tell this story? What did they hope to gain, if it were not true!? And then, we need to turn our attention to the subject and evidence of their testimony. Who is this Jesus? How can we account for the story of his life? For the claims He made? For the works He performed? Josh McDowell proposes 3**

**propositions: Lord, Liar, Lunatic. Was he a deceiver?  
Did he pull off the fraud of the ages? Was he deranged?  
Or, was he what he testified and those who believed in him  
testified, the Christ of God?!**

When we look for assurance in the word of God, we will find the needed information to dispel doubt and build faith!

*Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:30-31)*

A word of caution:

**I've seen people who are quick to raise questions but won't stick around for the answers. They say they want to believe; but they do not possess the discipline to study. There are no "magic pills" or quick fixes for unbelief. If doubt arises, we must have enough love for the truth to put forth the effort to find the answers. It is this seeking that separates the saved from the lost! Don't be lured into a false peace. Perhaps one of the reasons why people quit studying is that doing so often disturbs their sense that all is well, that they had it all figured out. To some degree the search for truth will always leave us a bit unsettled; but as we continue the journey, our faith deepens and our understanding grows. Don't exchange that for a shallow faith that is built on believing somebody else's conclusions years ago!**

***Jesus gave John encouragement to keep believing!***

In a remarkable beatitude Jesus gives both assurance and warning to John--"Blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over me".

**Jesus gently warns John that the evidence of who He is has been clearly given. Blessed is that man who does not allow his own expectations of what Christ ought to be or ought to do to interfere with what God has revealed to us.**

We need to be careful about second-guessing God.

**Sometimes Jesus might not do everything we think he ought to do—answer a certain prayer, heal a certain sick person, deliver us from a source of pain or anguish. But if the testimony of the Bible is true about him, he is always right in his decision whether we agree with it or not.**

Focus on the rewards of faith.

**So cherish that thought, "blessed is he...". Think about the blessings that will come to you in the world to come when you have overcome doubt, stayed with Christ when circumstances said forget about him. Think about the promises he has made:**

*“Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 10:32)*

*Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. (John 11:25-26)*

**Conclusion: The answer to doubt of course is faith. But remember that faith is not the absence of doubts, but the choice to trust God based on what He has told us rather than upon having the answer to every question. Do you have to know everything your doctor knows before you’ll take a pill? Of course not! Why? Because you trust Him, even though you do not know the answer to every question! In the same way, trust God!**