

## **OVERCOMING DOUBT**

**Luke 7:18-23**

Intro: Several years ago a good friend of ours from another state called to have a friendly chat. But as the conversation continued it was clear that she was troubled about a matter and wanted to talk about it. She was struggling with her faith. She was troubled by the fact that from time to time she would be haunted with doubts about the reality of the things in which she had always professed faith. Moreover, she had lost confidence even in her own sincerity due to sins she had committed during one of those times of doubt.

I believe every Christian can relate to what she was going through. I can. Even as a gospel preacher, I have found myself from time to time confronted with doubt. And all Christians do. Haven't you?

Perhaps we will be less troubled by these experiences if we understand how to cope with doubt as it arises. A story in the Bible helps us a great deal to do that. Read 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--Jn. 1:29-34  
John had testified that Jesus was that person. 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. Mt. 4:12

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?

***So there are two things I want all of us to see as we look together at John.***

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

Notice how often doubt is raised 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.

### **TAKE A LOOK AT THE RESPONSE OF JESUS**

*v. 21-22 Jesus sends back to John the needed message of assurance.*

"Tell John what you see and hear."

**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!—that Almighty 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).**

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

**Isn't it ironic and sad that those who longed most for a Savior tripped over him like a stumbling block? 1 Pet. 2:8 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.**

*So then, we again can learn some valuable things from Jesus' answer:*

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.

The testimony of God's word is sufficient to drive away doubt. 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?!

Think again about those words of warning to John: "Blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over me." Not everything Jesus says or does strikes us always as the right thing to say or do. Sometimes Jesus requires and asks of us things that might not seem to us to be best. If he really did what the record of the Bible says, then we have to admit he is right about everything. Sometimes we may be "in prison" so to speak. Sometimes Jesus might not do everything we think he ought to do. Answer a certain prayer. Heal a certain sick person. 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.

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, "Mt. 10:32". Jn. 11:25-26

**Conclusion: You can overcome doubt. Jesus has lived to earn first place in your life. Don't give that up to have something far inferior in value. And if you are not a Christian, accept the challenge of the evidence. Who is Jesus? How can you explain his life if he is not God's son? But if so, why not come and obey him?**