

Doubt

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- [0 : 0 0] Take your Bibles and turn to the Gospel of Matthew chapter 14.! We're going to begin reading at verse 22 and read through the rest of the chapter.
- ! Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side while he dismissed the crowd.
- After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.
- During the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. It's a ghost, they said, and cried out in fear.
- But Jesus immediately said to them, Take courage, it is I, don't be afraid. Lord, if it's you, Peter replied, tell me to come to you on the water.
- [1 : 0 8] Come, he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink, cried out, Lord, save me.
- Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. You have little faith, he said. Why did you doubt? And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.
- Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, Truly, you are the Son of God. When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country.
- People brought all their sick to him and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak. And all who touched him were healed. Jesus asked Peter that question, Why did you doubt?
- And we've been asking or looking at in these afternoons that question of, Why are you so downcast, O my soul? Why are you so discouraged?
- [2 : 1 6] And remember what we've been saying is that no matter how that discouragement got there, or whatever reason there is for it, there are better reasons to be encouraged.
- There's better reasons to be hopeful. And so, why are you so downcast, O my soul? In a certain way, it's a rhetorical question.
- It's a question that says, Really, there is no real reason to be so discouraged. Put your trust in God, for I will yet praise him, my Lord and God. So despair, discouragement, they're not permanent.
- Hope is permanent. Praise is permanent. And so this afternoon, we're going to talk about doubt. Doubt. Why did you doubt?
- Peter was literally sinking under the waves. And he's a desperate, terrified, unhappy man.
- [3 : 1 7] And it seemed like everything he was afraid of as he looked out there, the wind, the waves, all of that, all of that was actually going to sink him. All of his doubts, he thought, all of his doubts, he thought, they were going to come true.

Now, some of you struggle with doubts more than others. And I think that's good for some of us to realize is some of you hardly know what doubt is at all.

Strong faith. You don't doubt. But I know others wrestle with doubts a lot. And when you're sitting in your doubts, when you're sitting in your discouragement, your uncertainty about the Lord and can he save me, you're not encouraged.

You're not hopeful. You're not strong. You don't have what Nehemiah talked about. The joy of the Lord is your strength. And the question is, then, how do you get out of that doubt and then get into encouragement?

Why are you so downcast on my soul? Put your trust in God. Well, exactly what does that look like to go from doubt about God, doubt about what he's doing, doubt about our circumstances, to encouragement?

[4 : 34] To having great faith as opposed to little faith? Well, just in this passage, I think we could go to a lot of passages, but I want to kind of stick to what we see mostly here.

And I do see a few things that should encourage you. So doubt is something that you really wrestle with. I see a few things to encourage you in this passage.

And just the very, the first one that's sort of maybe behind the scenes, but it's there, is just because you're doubting doesn't mean that you're not a Christian. In Sunday school, we've been talking about that damaging way of thinking of all or nothing, black or white.

You can't have two things true at the same time. Well, just because you're doubting doesn't mean that you aren't a Christian. I mean, we're talking about Peter here.

Peter, why did you doubt? Now, Peter's the apostle. He's an apostle. He was the first one to say, when Jesus asked, who do you say that I am?

[5 : 39] And Peter said, you're the Christ, the son of the living God. And Jesus says, that was revealed to you by my father in heaven. Jesus loved Peter.

And Peter was living for Jesus. He had given up his fishing, his nets. He had followed Jesus. And so don't miss it.

Doubt and faith can come out of the same heart. But it was faith, remember, after all, that got Peter out of the boat to begin with.

It was that got Peter out to begin with. And so we want to avoid that unhappy way of thinking of where, if I doubt, I must not be a Christian. Sometimes Christians doubt.

And that's when we start to think, oh, I'm doubting. I can't be a Christian. I guess my question is, it says who? That's not what the Bible says.

[6 : 40] That's not what the Bible shows us. I think that's Satan whispering in our ears, driving us to discouragement. That's not Jesus. Jesus says, you have little faith. But little faith is way, way totally different from no faith.

Little faith in a big Jesus will save you. Because little faith connects you to this living Jesus. And so faith and doubt can wrestle in the same heart.

But it's not an all or nothing. Not an all or nothing. Now, secondly, so that's the first reason. You can be a Christian and still be doubting.

Now, secondly, why should you be encouraged? Because look at who was it that came to Peter and rescued Peter in his doubts? Well, it was Jesus.

Jesus himself came to Peter and helped him in his doubts. You know, our doubts dishonor Jesus. They dishonor God.

[7 : 45] They're quite an unjust accusation against him. When we're doubting him, we're saying, I don't think you're strong enough to do what you said. I don't think you're honest enough or you're good enough.

It's really quite an unjust accusation against him. But that doesn't keep Jesus from coming out to us in our doubts. He comes to us with grace.

You know, if Jesus only helped strong believers, well, he wouldn't have very many sheep left, would he? If he never went to doubting believers, he'd probably have lost half of his sheep.

But Jesus comes close to the strong and he comes to the weak. And so he comes to Peter. Peter is sinking under the waves of his doubt and of the water.

And, you know, if Jesus didn't come to weak believers in their doubts, who here would still be above the water?

[8 : 51] Who would have made it? So my faith and my doubts can fluctuate. I can have strong faith in some moments and then turn around and have weak faith in other moments and little doubt.

And then it seems like everywhere I am, my heart is just stuck in this doubt. But it's not. It's Jesus that saves me. Not my faith.

And I wonder, do you understand that? Faith connects us to the Savior. Faith itself doesn't save us.

It's faith that connects us to the Savior that actually saves us. And so underneath me are the everlasting arms. Underneath me, beneath the water, beneath the waves, under my feet is Jesus, who's the same yesterday, today, and forever.

And he saves his people. And so our faith and our doubts might rise and they might fall, but Jesus who died and rose again doesn't change. His heart to you, his commitment to rescue you, his commitment to help you, it doesn't change.

[10 : 05] And so what doubts do you wrestle with? Think about that. What doubts do you wrestle with? Doubts of God's goodness.

You're just saying, I don't think, I just don't think God is good in this. I don't see how he could be good. So that's maybe doubts of his ability. Doubts of his ability to help you, to keep you safe.

Isn't that what Peter is afraid of in this? He's afraid that he's going to die. Jesus can't keep him safe. Maybe you doubt the forgiveness of your sins, or maybe you doubt the father's love.

Well, what doubts do you wrestle with? And so there you are doubting and discouraged, but look who is coming to you. Look who is reaching out his hand and grabbing you and lifting you up.

Look who is for you. Christian, you have a savior. You have a savior. So be encouraged. Lift up your eyes. Jesus is walking to you out on the water.

[11 : 15] He's planning to pull you up. Now, third reason, you don't need to be discouraged because there's something for you to do. There's something for you to do. One way that discouragement exemplifies or comes out is just this feeling of, I can't do anything.

You see that in cases of discouragement and cases of depression. It's like, I don't have anything to do. There's nothing I can do to help. There's nothing.

I'm just stuck. And, but I, but I think you see, there's something for us to do. You aren't a helpless victim in your doubts. You aren't this helpless victim that can't, you know, you just throw up your arms and surrender your hands and surrender and helplessness and despair that, that itself leads to greater discouragement and then to greater despair.

And then it becomes this vicious cycle. And the more discouraged and despairing we feel, the less we do and the less we feel like we can do. And the less we feel like we can do, the more discouraged we are and downward. We, we go.

It begins this vicious cycle. But there is something for us to do. And well, what is it? If you're, if you're doubting, there is something for you to do about those doubts.

[12 : 27] And, and the first is get to know Jesus better, get to know Jesus better. That's really the ultimate answer. You know, we won't be ever doubting God in heaven because we'll know him.

Well, we'll have absolutely no reason to ever wonder. We'll know him. So we get to know Jesus better. That's the ultimate answer. Faith and doubt are, are personal things.

And what I mean by that is we believe and we doubt people. We doubt what they say because we doubt them.

And I think we sometimes forget that, that finally we are trusting a person. we're trusting in a person. And so we don't trust in some facts.

And you know what? Ultimately we don't, our faith doesn't rest on, Oh, that's what the Bible says. We believe this word because we believe him who spoke it.

[13 : 31] We believe him. We believe him who spoke it. And so we believe him. And so we're satisfied that this word is true because if he said it, then, then it's true.

So our faith finally rests on the God who speaks in the Bible. I sat in steak and shake with a young man and he was asking questions of, how do you know the Bible is true?

And he wanted me to really answer all of his questions to his satisfaction. And you can imagine all the kinds of questions that he was asking.

He wanted answers for these. And, but ultimately he was never satisfied with any of the answers. And I did the best I could, but you know, really it finally came down to, and this is what I ended up telling him, that, you know, your doubts are never going to be answered because you're not trusting, you're, you're trusting yourself.

Your faith is in yourself and your reasoning and your ability and your questions. And you're, you're, you're saying, God, if you can satisfy me, then I'll believe you. So his ultimate faith and ultimate under where he's leaning, his understanding was on him on himself.

[14 : 51] And so he trusted his mind, his heart. He was Proverbs three, leaning on his own understanding, but don't miss it. That, that is faith. He's believing a person.

He's believing himself. He trusted himself. He didn't trust God. So trust is something personal. And so is the opposite. Doubt is something personal.

Doubt is always at the end, something personal. We trust or we doubt people. And so the way faith grows and doubts shrink is we get to know Jesus better. And so if, if you are struggling in your doubts, there is one thing that you really need to do.

And that's get to know Jesus better. Go out to meet him. He's coming out to meet you. Go out to meet him. You need to get to know him better. You need to, you need to see him and understand him and learn to rely on him.

And that's going to grow as your experience of him grows. And actually, that's what so much of life is about. That's what so many of our trials are about. that we might grow in our hope and our faith in him because we know him better.

[16 : 03] Now, how do you get to know him better? Well, you, you, you walk with him. He comes through for you. You pray and you're answered and you live with him. You get to know what he's like.

You learn to rely on him. Now, I think in a few years, I mean, this is total speculation, but I think in a few years after the death and after the resurrection of Jesus, now Peter, he, in some way has gone down the road a lot further.

He knows Jesus better. I don't know if he would have sunk under the water. Because he knows Jesus better. He's grown in that. It's not because Jesus has changed, but just Peter knows him better.

That's what the spirit is doing in our whole life. And that's what we need to do. And so you need to get into this word. And you need to start interpreting your whole life and starting to see Jesus, the father in all of your life.

So through prayer, and by that, I mean through communion, through meditation, through putting the father for putting God at your, your right hand.

[17 : 19] And as you get to know him better, you say, you know what? I can trust him. And in the same circumstances can come up. And this time you believe and you walk on the water and you walk on the waves when before you couldn't.

So there is something for you to do. If you're in doubt, you aren't stuck. You aren't helpless. There's get to know Jesus better. The second thing is talk to someone about your doubts.

Talk to someone. Have you noticed that when we're all caught up in our fears and our anxiety and our doubts and our questions, they're really powerful.

They're very powerful when they're all stuck up here. When they're all going and swirling around in our head up here. So I think some good advice is just to tell someone about it.

Get it out. Doubts expressed. Telling people about your doubts. Getting them out into the light. You know, they're really big monsters when they're in the dark, but they ain't so big and bad.

[18 : 29] When you go out and you tell your brother or your sister, you said, this is what I'm wrestling with. And they could talk to you. They could bring some light to you. So you're not helpless and you're not alone in your doubt either.

And so this is where the body life comes. This is why it's so important. Remember, sin is deceitful. And one of the things that we need to keep from being deceived is to have other brothers and sisters talking to us.

Bringing the truth to us. In the same way, doubt is a lie about God. And so we need to have the truth talked into our ears. And we need our brothers and sisters.

And so rely on your brothers and sisters. And then there's finally one last thing. And it's just maybe move on.

Move on. Quit staring at the water. Quit staring at the waves. Keep your eyes fastened on Jesus. Leave it be.

[19 : 38] Quit looking at those winds and the waves and stick to Jesus. Paul wrote to Timothy that false teachers are always learning, but they're just never able to acknowledge the truth.

They're always learning. But they're never settled. They're always learning more, but they're never happy and satisfied and content with what they have.

They've never come around to, okay, actually bending to the truth and saying, okay, that's true. And I'm going to live like it's true. They never get down to living and believing what they've learned.

And so they begin again and again, and they never move on. They never move forward. They never, they just stay where they are. They're like a dog that's been chained, you know, to a tree. There's a nice worn out path there, but they haven't gone anywhere.

And so if you keep bringing up things to doubt, and you're, maybe it's just time to stop, to leave it be, to look to Jesus, to get on believing, to just say, Jesus said it.

[20 : 47] That's who he is. And to go on. And fourth and last, and this is a word to you if you aren't a Christian. Maybe you doubt that Jesus can save you.

Maybe your sins are too much. Maybe you doubt, like, I don't know if I'm one of the elect. I don't know if he will. I don't know if he can. You don't know if he's done enough.

And the gospel message is simply believe it. Take, take the gospel at its word. Take God's goodness at, on face value. And so if you're saying, well, he might not be willing, what about, I'm not one of the elect.

It's like, there's just doubts, doubts, doubts. Can I just say, try him. Try him. Try him. You've got nothing to lose. You know, your doubts aren't making you happy.

Your doubts aren't making you happy. Your doubts aren't going to save you. You aren't living this wonderful life. Now, and so try him, walk out onto the water.

[22 : 01] Take him at his word. No one who has trusted in the Lord has done so in vain. It's never been, I trusted in Jesus and, well, it fell through.

He never falls through. And so that's the word, try him. Your boat is going to sink anyways. You're going down. Your doubts won't save you.

But you know, Jesus can. Jesus has. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, I do pray that you would save sinners, that you would encourage our faith.

We can so easily be like Peter, looking at all of the problems and not looking at you. not getting to know you, not relying upon you.

And so we worry and we fret and we're all discouraged for no good reason. So, cut through all of our doubts, cut through all of our anxiety, cut through all of our fears, and, and help us to see you as the one who can save us completely in this life and in the next.

[23 : 15] Help us to have great faith. That tomorrow and the day after that, we would be leaning hard on you and looking hard into your eyes and walking to you.

and not looking around at all the things that make us afraid. Lord Jesus, thank you that you are a mighty Savior, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords.

So we look to you. We ask you to bless us as we are leaving and going on our way. Do us good. And we do pray all these things in Jesus name.

Amen.