

Why Do You Doubt

Matt 14:31

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31 Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" **2**

This is one of those stories that has enthralled people since it happened, from the very young to the old. A storm comes up on a sea with a deadly reputation threatening to capsize the boat that the disciples are in. They look out over the wind tossed waves and see Jesus coming towards them. Peter, ever brash, always the leap before you look one, says if it is you Lord, call me to come out to you. He steps out of the boat and begins to walk towards Jesus, then he gets distracted by the wind, the waves, the storm that is raging around him, and begins to sink. This passage is when the Lord is saving Peter from drowning. It's pretty easy to see the allure of this story to people. Kids like to imagine themselves as walking on water, adults like to imagine themselves as being better than Peter and not losing sight of Christ in their walk. The old syndrome of...

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"It can't happen to me"

Paul talks of a different story, the one of the Israelites who had the opportunity to be God's children. Who allowed the things of this world to distract them...

1 Cor 10:6-11

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6 Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. **7** Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY." **8** Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. **9** Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. **10** Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. **11** Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Lasciviousness, immorality, pride, attitude are all things that can and will distract one from keeping their eye on the Lord. You see the problem Peter ran into wasn't the wind, it wasn't the waves, it wasn't the roar of the storm, it was the fact that he quit looking at Jesus. The problem didn't come from without, it came from within. This is an important point that would do us all well to note...

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"Sin always comes from within, NEVER without"

This is what James describes for us in...

James 1:14-15

6

14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. **15** Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

That is what Paul is talking about. They had been lured away by the enticements of the world, their own pride, and all too often, their own attitudes. That is why he gives the warning to the Corinthians, to us...

1 Cor 10:11 7

12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.

That is the battle each of us face. Christianity is uniquely personal, individual. Yes, we are to strive together to help spread the Word, we are to comfort and strengthen one another. We are to teach and help one another grow spiritually and we are to do all this in love. But when the time comes, we will stand before our creator totally exposed for who and what we are, not as people of this world, but in how we compare with the standard of the Word of God. That is the warning...

8 **“TAKE HEED, LEST YOU FALL”**

1 Peter 4:17-18 9

17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? **18** AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?

The journey of this life, while in the company of friends, brethren, and loved ones is filled with trials, temptations, difficulties that are sometimes so indescribable as to be unbelievable. Peter says that if one is to be righteous, if one is to be saved, it will be because, with the strength given by God, they were able to overcome the world.

Paul, in his letter to the Romans talks about the Israelites and the Gentiles. He describes the Gentiles as branches, branches that are being grafted into the root that supports and nourishes. God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Word is that root. But even in that wonderful thought of joy and union with God, Paul has a warning for these Gentiles, using the Israelites to illustrate his point...

Rom 11:20 10

20 Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear;

His warning here is the same as we saw in 1 Cor. 10:11.

Take Heed, lest your own pride, arrogance, confidence, conceit, stubbornness cause you to fall away from the faith. That is what happened to Peter as he looked at the surrounding storm and took his eye off the Lord.

There are a couple of implied questions that I see in this brief exchange between Peter and Jesus. Jesus didn't ask Peter for a rundown of his excuses, He wasn't concerned about them. That's not to say that Jesus isn't concerned about the things of this world that can draw us away, that's not the case at all. Jesus has given man everything he needs to survive in this world and find a home eternal with God.

2 Tim 2:20-21 11

20 Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. **21** Therefore, if anyone

cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

That is the struggle of Christianity. As man, we look at the distractions of this world and see the seemingly insurmountable trials and temptations, our excuses for disobedience and lack of faith. God looks at them as tests to help strengthen our faith with the Word He has given us.

Matt 14:30 12

30 But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Step one is following Peter's example. It might have been a little easier for Peter since he was sinking into stormy water, but friends we also need to put aside our pride, conceit and recognize that we need to stay afloat in this world of sin and that can only be accomplished by keeping our focus on Christ.

There are some thoughts that I would like to pursue for the time we have left. The first, I think is seen in the question...

13 1) To the disciple

14 *"You of little faith, why did you doubt?"*

Such a simple question, but the depth of it is beyond comprehension. "You of little faith," please note that He doesn't tell Peter he has no faith, He says, "little faith." I think this is important as it illustrates the idea of faith being a moving, growing thing. Faith can never be static, it must be growing and increasing to be valid.

Heb 5:12-14 15

12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. **13** For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. **14** But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

The Hebrew states that faith, the Elementary Principle of God, is something that has both milk and strong meat. The analogy is that as a child we partake of milk, but there needs to come a time when milk, by itself, just isn't enough. There comes a time, even if by virtue of nothing other than time, the follower of God should grow in his faith to the point that he moves beyond the milk of the Word and begin to look into and digest the weightier matters, the strong meat, of the Word. Peter talks about this concept and gives some thoughts as to how this growth can be pursued and accomplished.

2 Peter 1:5-8 16

5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, **6** and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, **7** and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. **8** For if these

qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Increasing the characteristics of Christianity in ourselves is the path to eternal life. That's what Peter means when he says

17 *“For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

So the question Christ asked Peter, “Why did you doubt” is a question we all should be asking ourselves. We all have doubts in some areas. Is it how the scriptures stack up against archeology, or geology, or how science denies the creation account and offers some form of evolution as the solution? We might stand strong on the Word when it comes to the issues, musical instruments, homosexuality, the role of women in the church, whatever they might be, but if we then fudge on what the scriptures tell us in the story of the flood...

Gen 7:19-20

18

19 The water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered. **20** The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered.

Now let's assume for moment that the Earth, in the time of Noah, looked the way it does today, that's not too likely, but anyway, assuming that, the water was 15 cubits higher than the highest mountain. That's 22 ½ feet higher than Mount Everest at 29,024 feet high. That causes some Christians to begin to fudge in their acceptance of the scripture. I mean really, 22 ½ feet higher than Everest, let's get serious. But the scriptures are clear and that is what they say.

19

“Why do you doubt”

Peter looked at the storm around him and took his eyes off the Lord and began to sink into the depth of the sea. We cannot allow the doubts of the world, the so-called logic of what we are told the rules of the world are, to cause us to question the power of the Lord to keep us on top of the waters of that doubt. It doesn't matter that the story of the flood might seem to be just too out there to be true. It doesn't matter that the story of creation goes beyond the comprehension of man. It doesn't matter that the laws of physics in the universe deny that the sun and moon could stand still. It doesn't matter. The scriptures state that these things happened and faith demands that the follower of God not doubt but accepts God's Word for what it says, period. Here is the point. If a Christian, someone who claims to be a man of faith, doesn't have a strong enough faith to accept what the scriptures say without doubts, how can someone who has no faith be expected to accept them?

That brings us to our next point in the question Christ asked, if the man of faith, Peter has doubts, what about...

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2) Those who want to believe and obey, but can't harmonize their doubts with the Word

To them Christ asks, “Why do you doubt?” In the training that I received in sales it is always taught that when you know that the prospective customer has a need for the product, a welding shop needing steel, but they won't even consider what you are trying to say, then the problem isn't in

need, its somewhere else. Seems pretty basic, but you would be surprised at how some sales people fail to see that. If you know that someone has an understanding that they need Christ, God, in their lives but won't commit, the problem is somewhere else, which then becomes the quest, where do their doubts lie? Maybe even more important is how can those doubts be answered? This is where so many struggle. How do you answer the doubt that the flood could not possibly have happened? This illustrates the problem. There is absolutely nothing that can be used to conclusively prove that the flood occurred other than the scriptures. Don't forget...

Heb 11:1 21

1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Faith does prove the scripture, but only in the heart that accepts them. In the parable of the sower, Christ tells of the variety of hearts that the seed of the Word falls on. The heart that accepts the truth and the evidence of the Word is the good soil. We can't define the heart, we can only spread the seed of the Word. Paul writes in...

1 Cor 3:6-7 22

6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. **7** So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

What of the one who doubts that God will forgive the depth of their sins?

1 Cor 6:9-11 23

9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, **10** nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. **11** Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

What sin will God not forgive, only the one not repented of. What of the doubter who cannot accept the facts of the scriptures and the power and love of God revealed therein?

1 Cor 2:3-5 24

3 I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, **4** and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, **5** so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

Faith is a very personal response to God, it comes from hearing His Word, Rom. 10:17, without it man cannot please God, Heb. 11:6, that faith must provoke man to decide to follow the will of God in faith, Luke 13:3, in that faith man must proclaim Christ as the Son of God, Matt. 10:32-33, and in that faith, man must respond in faithful obedience to the commandments of God, Acts 22:16. That is God's Word, not my or anyone else's opinions, but God's truth. There really is only one other thought that needs to be addressed, but not by me, by you...

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“Why do you doubt”