

DO TROUBLES MAKE YOU DOUBTERS OR OVERCOMERS?

TEXT: *Matthew 11:6: Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.*

You are only as strong as your faith. Every believer in Jesus must walk by faith.

Romans 5:1: Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:17b: The just shall live by faith.

Hebrews 11:6: Without faith it is impossible to please Him [God].



Real faith does not tremble when put under trial. It delights in being tested because it strengthens, like the muscles of your arms or legs. God permits our faith to be tried in order to sift out the dross.

The trial of your faith is more precious than gold that perishes.

Hebrews 10:32: But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

Hebrews 4:14a: Let us hold fast the profession of our faith, without wavering.

James 1:6: But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

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The disciples could have worked themselves up into an awful racket of emotion trying to still the angry tempest. But three little words from Jesus, and the wind drops from a shrill scream to a soft whisper. The roaring sea whimpers for a moment like a sobbing child in its mothers arms, and then it's settled down to sleep on the breast of mother nature.

Just three little words from Jesus; or 1 million words of rebukes and commands by

the disciples trying to believe.

Nine brokenhearted, bewildered disciples cry out to their master:

Matthew 17:19: Why could not we cast him out?

Oh, how our heart has bled as we left this church many times when we could still see in the midnight hours those who were yet struggling to have faith for their deliverance and body; or to be filled with the Holy Ghost; or to believe God for the salvation of some loved one.

There is a vast difference in trying to have faith, and really living by the faith of Jesus. Genuine faith can no more manifest itself without results than the sun can shine without light. What is this we have been calling faith anyway? We have made it a condition of our mind, when it is a divinely imparted gift of the heart.

Romans 10:10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

How much faith do you have? That is exactly what the Lord is trying to show us through our tribulations and trials. What we have when we come through is really all we had to start with, only now it is boiled down. When we are tested, we find out how many doubts we were really filled with, and the Lord knows but one way to bring them out. What we do with them then will determine our spiritual growth.

John the Baptist was undoubtedly the greatest preacher of righteousness, and the most prominent figure in his day. He was great, because he was born great. He was born in answer to pleading prayer, filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth. He abandoned the highest desires his parents had for his future in the priestly office. He departed to the desert plains. In this solitude and peace, along with God far from noisy crowds, this man was being made by God for a great ministry.

Brother, sister, unless God prepares us, all the preparations we make in schools and universities are but a hindrance to us.

It was out there and in God's Bible school that John the Baptist opened his heart to receive the divine plans, purposes, and provisions. While the Spirit taught him, he meditated and mused over the messages from heaven, and the fire of heaven burned within his soul.

While God was preparing a man for the times; he also was ripening the hearts of the people for the man.

Over 400 years ago, the last prophet had been buried. There were no messages from the Lord to comfort their terror-stricken hearts, as the people who had seen the armies of Greece and Rome conquer nearly all the peoples of the earth. They were sad and heavy laden. They were captive to the Roman Empire. Why did God not answer their travailing cry for deliverance? Weary they trudged to the tables of the publicans to pay heavy taxes. They longed, year after year, for their God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to deliver as He had done for their forefathers in Egypt.

Nearly all hope was crushed out and slowly dying, for so long God had not sent a prophet. That was God's way; by choosing a man to reveal His own thoughts for His own people. But no message came from the Lord. No hope of deliverance from the darkness and slavery of Roman rule which had for years, filled their body and soul with misery and injustice.

Suddenly, like a burst of thunder, a voice in the wilderness was heard!

Matthew 3:3b: Prepare ye the Way of the Lord, make His paths straight.

What can this be? Who is this strange man? Could it be true? Was it possible that once again the heavens had opened and the ears of man, seemingly forgotten and forsaken, could hear the voice of the Lord?

No wonder the countryside was stirred. No wonder that in great numbers the crowds gathered to hear the preaching of a fearless, thundering prophet of the Lord. He did not make his appearance or debut in the temple or in the city as other reformers did. He didn't need to. For rumors were rapidly broadcast about a man who resembled in appearance the great Elijah!

Oh, how fearlessly and unrelentingly he rebukes the sins of the Scribes and Pharisees, denouncing them as a ***generation of vipers.***

Matthew 3:7: Who hath warned you to flee the wrath to come?

Publicans, harlots, extortionist, even hardened soldiers of Rome melted in heart. They were found weeping, crying out for mercy. The highways and byways were heavy with dust and the noises of the crowds that were coming to hear.

Mark 1:5: And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

He told of the coming Redeemer, the Deliverer. He said that he was only a voice crying in the wilderness.

Matthew 3:11b: but He that cometh after Me is mightier than I, Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire:

Think of it! Thousands turning to the Lord under the ministry of him of whom Jesus said:

Matthew 11:11: Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.

One and a half years pass. John the Baptist is denouncing the sins of Herod, king of Galilee. This rebuke cost him his freedom. He told Herod it was not right for him to have his brother's wife, and he really stirred up a hornet's nest when he preached against adultery and looseness in the standards of marriage. I don't know but what we might suffer the same consequences as John did.

1. Doubt Squeezed out of us by tribulation:

This man of God is caged in a dungeon. For a prophet, the inactivity of being penned up in a dreary prison cell was too great a contrast for him to take lightly. After a life of boundless liberty in the desert, he is now treated as a criminal. This brought a deep hurt to the prophet with a big heart.

The evil will surely come around when you want sympathy and petting. He will drag man into a corner, then, try to stab him. If he can't do that, he will try to starve his faith.

Like Elijah, John fell into a state of despondency. He fell into a prison mood. Hope does not burn brightly there in that damp, dusty place. The world looked dark to him. The checkered shadows on the stone walls turned to ghostly specters. His spirit is wounded. Why has Jesus seemingly deserted him? This haunts his loneliness. His renewed horror was amplified by the discords of the clanking chains on his hands and feet.



It is nearly heartbreaking to watch God's children going through a trial when they do not see Jesus in it. How pitiful they look as

though deserted by God and saints.

So, here is a prophet who holds strong claims on our admiration. His faith has been as steady and strong as the rising sun. Job also looks to us like a perfect model of Christian perfection. God sees something in the heart that must come out.

John has commended Jesus to all the disciples he had following him. He bowed in such loyalty that it is most painful to behold. Eagerly he turns away from himself and from all the hearts of his loyal followers to this stranger of Galilee. In a triumph worthy of highest respect, he watches the tide of popular favor ebb away from himself to encircle Him.

John 1:29: Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

John 3:30: He must increase, but I must decrease.

But now — he is doubting. He is wondering if he made a mistake. Is Jesus the Lamb of God? Why, why, why??

It would be well to stop a moment to get a clear understanding of two words. This will help all of us often in the future. These two words are ***doubt*** and ***unbelief***.

Unbelief has a stronger meaning of refusal to accept teachings of divine revelation.

Doubt may be defined as *a fluctuation of the mind, arising from defective knowledge or evidence*: it is an unsettled state of opinion concerning the reality of an event, or the truthfulness of a heretofore confident affection.

Doubt comes from a wounded affection, rather than a revolt of reason. Therefore, doubts, when properly dealt with, will make the greatest destroyers of satan's lies and insults known to a Christian. If you turn to the proper source for help, your faith will be much stronger than all the clouds of doubt with which the devil can ever trouble you.



2. How Doubts are settled and faith increased:

The testings prove the degree of faith we have. John's faith was engaged in mortal combat. He had to admit it. Faith was slipping away. Reason was gaining the victory.

What a difference with Peter. He was also in prison, but he just lay asleep, not worrying or reasoning why. A prison can be as good as a palace if the Lord is real in our soul.

Paul and Silas did not bellyache or complain to the Lord about their fate. They prayed and sang.

To one, trouble makes him a doubter; to another, trouble makes him a shouter.

Though John's faith was tried, genuine faith will always direct you to Jesus for a solution. Where did John take his doubts?

Luke 7:19a: And John, calling unto him two of his disciples, sent them to Jesus, saying, Art Thou He that should come? or look we for another?

He did not let them devour his faith entirely.

Jesus knows how to dissolve doubts. Most of the time, it is easier to grumble and complain to everyone, especially to those of unhealthy religious experience. But when you are tempted to doubt your salvation, or the Baptism of the Spirit, or the power of God — your doubts will be short-lived if you go directly to Jesus in heart sincerity and prayer. It will be surprising how sneaking doubts will sulk off like cockroaches when the light of faith in Jesus is turned on.

Galatians 2:20: I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.

That faith is not of ourselves; it is the gift of God.

3. How will Jesus treat doubts brought to him?

How will Jesus answer my wounded heart's cry? Will He be harsh with John? I have never known Him to be so with anyone in prison for His sake.

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Matthew 11:4b-54b: Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

⁵ The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.

Jesus knows how to use the scythe that mows down the weeds of doubt that the devil sows in the heart of saints who are tested and tried. His words are most remarkable. They carry evidence of such weight that they invite faith to the heart. These words are a reminder to John that quickened something to his mind, very familiar and sacred. John knew the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Jesus. Jesus did not try to do his solving for him, but brought him into contact with the Word of God, the source of faith.

Romans 10:17: So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

I can see those disciples of John as they gave John proof that the deliverer he prophesied about really had come — the blind, the lame, the lepers, the sick were delivered. Instead of scolding John, Jesus had said,

Matthew 11:7b: What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

I can hear John saying thru his *sobs*, ‘Did Jesus say all those things about me? Did He really do all those miracles? Oh, where could I find anyone like Jesus?’

Where would you go?

Jesus is the One Who was to come. Once John doubted, now he shouts, ‘I know Him for myself!’

We need trials. We need the rain as well as the sunshine. Trouble is God’s secret messenger.

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