

Can a Strong Man Doubt?

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Introduction: Some of the most fearful moments in a Christian's life is when we realize that doubt is creeping into our hearts.

- A. We may see these doubts influence our prayers, our faith and our relationship with God.
 - 1. In time each of us will deal with it.
 - 2. Should I feel as if I am the only one dealing with such a problem?
- B. We will examine the doubts of a truly strong man. (**Lk 7:18-28**)

(Luke 7:18-28 NKJV) Then the disciples of John reported to him concerning all these things. {19} And John, calling two of his disciples to *him*, sent *them* to Jesus, saying, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" {20} When the men had come to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'" {21} And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. {22} Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that *the* blind see, *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed, *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised, *the* poor have the gospel preached to them. {23} "And blessed is *he* who is not offended because of Me." {24} When the messengers of John had departed, He began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? {25} "But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts. {26} "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. {27} "This is *he* of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' {28} "For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

- 1. In this verse we will learn about the source of doubt and how to alleviate it.
- 2. We also will learn about the mercy and longsuffering of God.

I. The Cause of Doubt

- A. John expressed doubt in the identity of Jesus. (**Lk 7:19-20**)
 - 1. Our first reaction might be one of disappointment.
 - 2. What had John already seen and confessed?
 - a. At the baptism of Christ. (**Mk 1:10-11; Jn 1:32-33**)
 - b. He expressed his conviction to the future disciples of Jesus. (**Jn 1:35-37**)
 - c. In spite of all the preaching he did, there was still a time for doubt!
- B. There are two possible reasons for John's doubt.
 - 1. Jesus had not done what John expected.
 - a. What did John say the Messiah would be like? (**Mt 3:11-12**)

- b. Why had Jesus not purge out the wicked Jews and done away with the Romans? John may have harbored a misconception about the nature of Jesus' work!
 - c. We often misunderstand the working of God, especially His timing.
 - 2. John was in prison and likely both isolated and discouraged.
 - a. If you take the strongest man and isolate him in suffering, depression and doubt will come.
 - b. The great prophet Elijah knew this feeling! (**1 Kgs 19:4**)
 - c. Brethren, given the right circumstances it could be you expressing these doubts!
- C. Things that cause us to doubt today
 - 1. When we are ignorant of the ways of God.
 - 2. When we isolate ourselves from the word of God.
 - 3. When we suffer from others actions.
 - 4. When we allow sin to harden our hearts.

II. The Removal of Doubt

- A. John sought more information from Jesus! (**Lk 7:19-20**)
 - 1. Always take your doubts to the Lord! This is exactly what prayer is for!
 - 2. Consider the example of Habakkuk. (**Hab 1:2-4**)
- B. Jesus removes John's doubt by scripture. (**Lk 7:21-23**)
 - 1. Jesus refers to two OT prophecies. (**Isa 35:3-6, 61:1**)
 - 2. Because John knew the scripture this example would be of great encouragement to him.
 - 3. Can you see John hearing of these things and recalling the scripture and saying "That's right, He is the Messiah!" His momentary doubts are erased!
- C. Lessons for us during times of doubt.
 - 1. Learn how to renew your faith from a study of God's word. Do you have a "reason of the hope" within you? (**1 Pt 3:15**)
 - 2. Do not let doubts linger! Go to God and to spiritual men for help.
 - 3. Always express yourself, including your doubts, to God in prayer! Are you now regularly going to God in prayer?
 - 4. Always distinguish between the actions of men and that of God.
 - 5. Deal quickly with sin in your life. Most of our doubts lie here. When we try to walk in sin our faith will be weakened and will eventually die. (**Lk 8:14; Rev 3:1-2**)

III. Understand the True Nature of God

- A. How did Jesus respond to the doubts of John?
 - 1. Not like we might! Rather than being offended and harsh Jesus is tender and understanding!
 - 2. Jesus knows all too well the temptations we face. (**Heb 2:17-18**)
- B. What was Jesus evaluation of John? (**Lk 7:24-28**)
 - 1. John was not like a tall reed blown by the wind! No, he was a strong tree.
 - 2. He was not one who would be flattering to man.

3. He was more than a prophet! He fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi! **(Mal 3:1)**
 4. Of all the prophets who had come, he was the greatest!
- C. Our God does not cast us off because of a momentary lapse in faith.
1. How many great men of faith sinned? All of them. They always repented however.
 2. We should never think of ourselves being above sin. When that happens we will be filled with pride and suffer the fate of king Saul and others. **(1 Cor 10:12)**
 3. Are you quick to repent and confess your sin to God or do you run and hide?
- D. How do we respond to the weaknesses in others?
1. We need to be careful here because we cannot read hearts!
 2. Are we quick to brand and avoid other Christians because "they ought to know better!" What if God treated you this way? **(Jas 2:13)**
 3. We should be quick to see those who are struggling and rush to help them! To do this we must care and be involved with others. **(Heb 12:12-13)**
- Conclusion:** Let us not neglect the great faith given to us.
- A. Consider the great position God has placed us in. **(Lk 7:28)**
 1. Unlike John, we are in the kingdom!
 2. Do you recognize what God has done for you?
 - B. Let us eliminate the cares of this world so that we might have the proper time to build our faith and that of others.
 - C. Doubt, handled properly, will in time become a great source of strength! **(Ps 73:12-17)**