

STRENGTHENING THE FAITH OF THE DOUBTING BELIEVER

WEEK 4: WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW FROM SCRIPTURE WHEN DOUBTING?

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

- The goal of this six-week class is to dive into our practical salvation. We want to know what the *real* Christian life looks like on the ground when we face times of doubt.
- We all face times of trial and suffering. We all do things that we know we should not have done. We all don't always *feel* like we are saved every moment of every day.
- What do we do with all of this and how can we keep going in times that we may just want to give up?
- **The Question:** Are you going to cling to your questions and doubt or are you going to cling to God and His promises?
- **Our schedule will look like this:**
 - Week 1: What is doubt? Is it opposed to faith? What does the Bible say about doubt?
 - Week 2: What is the root of doubt in the believer's life? How does Satan use doubt?
 - Week 3: What are the ramifications of doubt in the believer's life? How does it affect me?
 - **Week 4: What do we need to know in times of doubt? Part 1 (look at biblical texts)**
 - Week 5: What do we need to know in times of doubt when we sin? (biblical texts)
 - Week 6: How can we cultivate assurance of our salvation in our daily life?

INTRODUCTION

- This morning we are starting a two part series by looking through some biblical texts to learn how Jesus and others deal with believers who may have been weaker in their faith.
- The goal over these two weeks is to make sure that we understand what the Bible has to say, in the proper context, so that we can have peace and walk in victory.

SATAN AND JESUS

- I want to start with this interaction because I believe that it sets in place some foundational truths which we need to know and understand as we move forward in faith.
- The record of the temptation of Jesus by Satan actually starts with Jesus' baptism.
- **Matthew 3:13-17** "Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?' But Jesus answering said to him, 'Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he permitted Him. After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.'"
- After God publicly declared that Jesus was His Son, Jesus was led into the wilderness where He would spend some 40 days fasting. After that, Satan comes along and begins to tempt Him.
- **Matthew 4:3-11** "And the tempter came and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'
 - Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.' Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'
 - Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.' Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him."
- What we want to do is look at what God said concerning Jesus in **Matt 3:17** "...this is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
 - Where did Satan aim his attack against Jesus in his first two temptations?
 - **Are you really the Son of God?** If you are, then do whatever I command you to do.
 - This can be the idea of *since* You are the Son of God, prove it.
 - Or, if you really are what God just proclaimed, then you will do what I command.

- Satan was not just tempting Jesus to do what he commanded Him to do, but he was also tempting Him to not trust in what God had just said about Him.
- Satan knew who Jesus was. He knew that He had come to continue the plan which was put in place before the foundations of the world.
- His only goal was to thwart the plans of God so that he would ultimately have the victory.
- Think about each individual temptation that Satan uses against Jesus.¹
 - **Jesus' temptations follow three patterns that are common to all men.** The first temptation concerns the lust of the flesh (Matthew 4:3–4). Our Lord is hungry, and the devil tempts Him to convert stones into bread, but He replies with Scripture, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. The second temptation concerns the pride of life (Matthew 4:5–7), and here the devil uses a verse of Scripture (Psalm 91:11–12), but the Lord replies again with Scripture to the contrary (Deuteronomy 6:16), stating that it is wrong for Him to abuse His own powers. The third temptation concerns the lust of the eyes (Matthew 4:8–10), and if any quick route to the Messiahship could be attained, bypassing the passion and crucifixion for which He had originally come, this was the way. The devil already had control over the kingdoms of the world (Ephesians 2:2) but was now ready to give everything to Christ in return for His allegiance. But the mere thought almost causes the Lord's divine nature to shudder at such a concept and He replies sharply, "You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only" (Deuteronomy 6:13).
- **Not only did Satan come and question Jesus, but He also used Scripture.**
- This is where we need to know our Bibles so that we can understand the attacks that come against us.
- The means by which Satan tempted Jesus was to take Scripture out of context and hope that Jesus would believe what he was saying and not what God meant.
- *While this class is not about hermeneutics or proper Bible interpretation, I think this should be a caution to us all when we study the Bible.*
 - Going back to **Genesis 3**, Satan asked the question...*did God really say...* That is exactly what is happening here as Satan misuses Scripture.
 - This doesn't mean that we must be experts in biblical interpretation, but we must be willing to look up whatever the text is so that we can know what it means.
- In **verse 6**, Satan quotes **Psalm 91:11-12**.

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-temptations.html>

- MacArthur says about this usage “...but utterly twisted its meaning, employing a passage about trusting God to justify testing Him.”²
- In other words, can we believe that God should be trusted to care for His people? **Absolutely!**
- That does not mean that we then go and act foolishly and take unnecessary risks. Especially, which is in this case, for the praise of Satan (or men).
- The Lord uses many means (even angels) to care for His people. We should never presume His care for us when we act foolishly.
 - While He will never leave us nor forsake us, He will allow us to face the consequences of our foolish actions.
- On the path of life there are many stones that can trip up the believer, an image drawn from frequent occurrences on the footpaths of ancient Israel (cf. Prov 3:23). The Lord anticipates the perils and problems that face his people, and when they start to stumble the Lord’s angels steady and support them. By this means the angels provide preventative care, not just triage after a disaster.³
- Speaking of angels, **Hebrews 1:14** “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?”
- We may not know all the ways that angels minister to us, but we know that the Lord has ordained that they are there for us.
- **Think about how all of this is active in your own walk with the Lord.**
 - How many times has a thought come to you that challenges your thoughts of God or who you are as a believer in Christ?
 - If you’re really saved, why did you just do that?
 - If you loved God as much as you told people you did, you never would have done that.
 - If God loved you, you wouldn’t be in the mess that you are right now.
 - And the list of attacks goes on and on.
 - We need to keep in mind our 3 F’s...if what we are being accused with are fears, faults, or failures, that is not from the Lord but an attack to keep us from the grace that we so desperately need.

SOME MISUSED BIBLE VERSES THAT BRING CONDEMNATION

- Throughout church history, Bible verses have been used to attempt to prove any and all imaginations of man’s heart.

² John F. MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*: NASB. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), Mt 4:6.

³ Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73–150*, ed. E. Ray. Clendenen, vol. 13, NAC (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2019), 187.

- Sometimes, these are from a place of real love and a genuine attempt at caring. Other times, the same Scriptures which are meant to be a cool balm on our weary souls end up being a sledge hammer brought down to extinguish the last smoldering ash.

Philippians 2:12-13

- **Philippians 2:12** “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling...”
- When some read this, they see *always obeyed, much more, work out your salvation, and fear and trembling.*
- In other words, you need to not just always obey, but be increasingly more obedient so that you will know that you are saved. If you are not always obedient or increasing in your obedience, there should be fear and trembling that you may not be saved.
 - Where is the focus of this interpretation? **It is all about you.**
 - Where is the truth in this interpretation? As Christians, we are to strive for obedience.
 - Why is this a bad interpretation? It holds that your obedience depends on you and is *the* litmus test for if you are saved or not.
 - This is why people walk around afraid of life and fearful of God. They are so focused on themselves and what they are doing, they no longer have joy.
- This type of interpretation *should* bring doubt into the believer’s life. Why? Because you are never, never, never, never, no not ever, going to be obedient all the time in your walk with the Lord.
 - Also, you are not always going to see an increase in your obedience either...you may have sometimes where you are experiencing some trials and hardships which seem to take you over.
- This is why a little Bible study knowledge goes a long way.
- **Philippians 2:13** “...for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”
 - I love the *so that* clause in Scripture...but a very close second place is *for*. This means that it is grammatically connected to the previous verse and should not be taken on its own.
 - For, (or since or because) we believe in verbal inspiration (that the Holy Spirit inspired the very words which were written...not just the idea of the word) *and* to all parts of speech (verbs, conjunctions, adjectives, etc.).
 - This is precisely why **verses 13-14** *must* be taken together when we interpret what Paul has said to the church at Philippi and what its significance is for us today.

- We know from **verse 12** that the believer is to work, it is their right response to being saved by the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we read **verse 13**, we have the power to accomplish our work of obedience...it is because (for) God is at work in us to accomplish what He wills for us.
 - Think of it this way, as a believer, God is now energizing both your will and your actions.⁴
 - The Gr. word for “will” indicates that He is not focusing on mere desires or whimsical emotions but on the studied intent to fulfill a planned purpose.⁵
 - **Do you understand what Paul is saying here?**
 - The *thing* (doubt, struggle with sin, etc.) has the intent in you to fulfill an already planned out purpose. Also, not only is there a purpose, but that purpose is for God’s good pleasure.
- **So, God is not just allowing things to come upon you for no good reason.**
 - He is not calling you to work out your salvation on your own or even work towards your salvation.
- We can say that God wants us to work *because* we are saved.
 - But we are not working through our own power, *but* the power that God has give us.
- Why should this bring comfort, rest, and/or peace to the believer’s heart and mind? The thing that you are facing, God already knew and is using it for His good pleasure and to cause you to be more obedient in various areas of your life towards Him.
- If He does not work it in, you will never work it out.⁶

Hebrews 10:26-27

- This is one of the debated verses between Arminians and Calvinists. While all the warning passages in Hebrews bring some weight with them, this one in particular seems to be the weightiest.
- **Hebrews 10:26-27** “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.”
- The real weight comes from reading the first few words...*for is we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth.*
- **What’s the first thing we should notice about reading this verse?**
- It starts with a conjunctive...*FOR*...just like before.

⁴ John F. MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*: NASB. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), Phil 2:13

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: Philippians*, ed. Elliot Ritzema, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 72.

- “...we can confidently say that the book of Hebrews was written to the Hebrew-Christian community as a whole, which would consist of a mix of true believers and those still leaning on the Old Testament sacrificial system. In Hebrews, the author is demonstrating the superiority of Christianity over Judaism.”⁷
- Now, let’s take a look at the context of the verse in chapter 10 of Hebrews.⁸
 - 10:1-4, The insufficiency of the sacrifice of animals to cleanse from sin
 - 10:5, The incarnation of Christ
 - 10:6-9, Old Testament offerings God has not desired and have been done away with
 - 10:10-14, We are sanctified through the single sacrifice of Christ who does not need to offer many sacrifices
 - 10:15-18, We have a new covenant
 - 10:19-22, Entering the holy place of the blood of Jesus, beyond the veil so that we can draw near to God
 - 10:23-25, Hold fast to this confession and uplift one another
 - 10:26, ***The verse in question***
 - 10:27, Judgment
 - 10:28, Abandoning the law of Moses
 - 10:29-31, Stricter judgment for those who reject the blood of Christ by which they were sanctified
 - 10:32, In former days you are persecuted
- We cannot assert that Hebrews 10:26 is written only to those who are saved. After all, how could they be saved if they are looking back to the old sacrificial system? But, without knowing exactly who is and is not trusting in Christ, the writer of Hebrews would generically address everyone and give the proper warning that if you go on sinning willfully (i.e., abandon the truth found in Christ and his sacrifice), then there will be no sacrifice for sins because Jesus’ sacrifice is the only one that can take away sin.⁹
- Counselees (Christians), fearful that they might lose their salvation must not only be told that God wants and expects them to reach a full assurance of the faith, *but that this passage, that many fear so much, refers not to persons who are concerned about whether or not they are genuine Christians, but to those who have trampled the gospel under foot.* This is apostasy that is described here.¹⁰

⁷ <https://carm.org/about-salvation/does-hebrews-1026-teach-that-we-can-lose-our-salvation/>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Jay E. Adams, *Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, and Jude*, The Christian Counselor’s Commentary (Cordova, TN: The Institute for Nouthetic Studies, 2020), 98.

- The Greek term carries the idea of **deliberate intention that is habitual**. *The sin is rejecting Christ deliberately*. These are not isolated acts. According to the Mosaic legislation, such acts of deliberate, premeditated sin required exclusion from the congregation of Israel (cf. Nu 15:30, 31) and from its worship (cf. Ex 21:14). Such sins also excluded the individual from sanctuary in the cities of refuge.¹¹
- The apostate is beyond salvation because he has rejected the only sacrifice that can cleanse him from sin and bring him into God's presence. To turn away from that sacrifice leaves him with no saving alternative.¹²
- This talks about a lifestyle of sin without any regards to what God has said. These people know what the truth is and may even agree with it. But they have not put the truth into practice in their lives.
- We should not fear because we have sinned and repented of that sin. We should not think that we are someone too far gone for God to save or keep saved. This is not at all what this passage is talking about. It is specifically aimed at those who willfully reject the saving knowledge of Christ and decide that they are no longer going to follow Him.
- This is why Jesus says in **Matthew 10:22** "You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved."
 - In the context of this Hebrews passage, these Jewish believers were coming under persecution, and some decided to go back to the old way of living.
 - Thus, they show themselves to be unsaved. Not that they can never be saved, but since they are relying on the old sacrificial system and not on Christ's once and for all sacrifice, they have removed themselves from grace and are now relying on the law.

Galatians 5:4

- **Galatians 5:4** "You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace."
- Who is the *you* here? It is the one who desires to find his justification or be sanctified by keeping the law.
- What is interesting here in Galatians is that Paul is talking to those who would be considered believers.
- Because of that, many take this to mean they lose their salvation...*severed from Christ...fallen from grace*.
- *But that's not what Paul is saying*. Christians cannot become *unjustified*. But you can stunt your own sanctification. If you desire to try and further your growth as a believer by the works of the law, you are severing yourself from Christ and no longer operating under grace and faith.
- You are still saved, albeit no longer joyful or fruitful for the kingdom.

¹¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*: NAS. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), Heb 10:26.

¹² Ibid.