

Why do you doubt

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[0 : 00] I'd like just to say, to use as my text, why do you doubt? Some weeks ago I spoke about faith, and I think it is only right to keep the balance and to speak now of what is not the opposite of faith, but the conduct of faith, that is unbelief, doubting rather.

Unbelief is the opposite of faith. Now I'm not going to talk about belief as such, although unbelief is doubting. Unbelief is a denial of the existence of God.

That's atheism, or maybe in a milder form, agnosticism. There is that kind of unbelief, and there is only one answer to the atheist, and that is that he is a fool.

That's the only answer for the atheist. That's what the Bible says. There is an unbelief which results in the rejection of Jesus Christ, of which the Pharisees were guilty in the days of Christ, and of which people are guilty in all ages.

A willful enmity and rejection of the Lord Jesus. Now that is unbelief. But I'm not going to talk of that.

[1 : 52] What I want to talk about is the doubtings that the Lord's people have regarding their interest in the Lord Jesus, their lack of assurance, and to say, well, I'm afraid.

I'm afraid that a good work of grace never really began in my heart. I see myself so different to those I know, the Lord's people, that I often conclude I'm not one of them.

Many people think like this. And then, however much they might rejoice sometimes, there's always something coming, and which causes them to doubt, and they come to this conclusion, that they are not the Lord's people after all.

Now let us consider this experience of doubting. And I'm going to talk about it for the comfort and health by hope of those people who are in this condition, and living under this shadow.

First of all, I may say that it is a fact of Christian experience. Doubting is simple.

[3 : 35] Doubting is simple. Here it brought forth upon Peter the rebuke of his Savior. It's wrong to doubt God.

It's simple doubting. Nevertheless, it is a fact of Christian experience. And it is in that life that I want to say something about it this evening.

Now perhaps you would be surprised if I begin by saying that doubting, although it is wrong, really implies the existence of a saving faith.

The doubting of a Christian experience is quite different to the willful unbelief of the person who has never received Christ into his heart.

The two things are at kind of different. One is willful and deliberate. The other things, the person who has it with trembling, makes him uncomfortable, causes him happiness.

[4 : 56] He doubts, and he would like to be sure. Now then, this doubting implies the existence of a kind of faith in God.

Now I must say, since I have referred to that, that faith, though that is not to be my subject, but the other thing doubting.

Faith is founded never on things, but always on the testimony of the word of God. That faith is not to be my subject.

seat you're sitting on. That doesn't say that you haven't saved faith. What I'm trying to convey to you is that the feelings we have are no proof about having saving faith or not. The saving faith and great faith is founded on the testimony of the word of God. That is to say, God says something in his word. Therefore, faith is to believe it. But believe it, you say. How can I believe it? It's all contrary to reason. I don't see to the darkness of the mystery. How can I believe? Have I arrived to believe? Now all these questions are all together, sinful and wrong. You've no right to question anything that God says. Now, faith is to trust the word of God. Not to feel good. Not even to be good. But simply to take God at his word, to believe what he says, to take it to yourself. That's true. So that's how

I say that he is founded on the testimony or on the word of God. Now faith in believers and in the personal interest in Christ. And in all the needed promises, that is, in God's supply of their promises, is also founded on the word of God. On nothing else. But faith in the the word of God. Not on the length of their experience or their profession. Or anything but the word of God. In other words, supposing I get anything from God or something I get from God or something I get from God or something I get from God or something I get from God.

[8 : 11] In other words, supposing I get from God or supposing I believe that I shall get anything from God, I must believe, if my faith is right, that I am going to get it. Not because I am better than you. Because I don't think that. But for Jesus' sake. That's faith. Faith in the promise. It comes. The promises of faith.

The promises fulfilled to me and to you. Not because we are better than you. Not because we are good. But because Jesus died and rose again.

Now some people don't. Now some people don't. Or seem to don't all the time. They live as it were in a perpetual spiritual winter. They never see the sun. They are in a light. A climate. And they never get the warmth of the love of Christ or his fellowship.

Whenever he leaves them. Whenever he leaves them. They are always gloomy. They are always looking into their own heart. They are always concluding. And any good thing that they ever enjoyed.

What about their own imagination.

[10 : 08] Oh Jesus Christ. The nearest to come to it is. Well I hope so. Are you a believer? Well I'm a great stranger. But I would like to be. I hope I am.

I think I might have told you once I was seated with a dear old, very old Christian lady some years ago.

And I never saw her but in gloom, surrounded by clouds of night. I never knew her, although I knew her over the years. I never knew her. She doesn't belong to this place.

But I never knew her to be the same spiritual mode. And one day I said to her, I was seated with her, no, we're going to get a Bible.

So we've got two Bibles. I put one on her knees and I took her to myself. And I turned up various passages in the Bible, giving evidence of the place and part.

[11 : 08] I was called here. Literally, I would say, no, can you say that? But I would like to. It's not I would like to, but can you or can you not? Then she would say yes. Well then, if you can, you're a Christian.

But I was content with one. I turned over to the great partnership of a testament. Remember, you have all these marks on your own profession.

And the Bible says that those who have these marks are the true people of God. And oh yes, she said, that's all right, but I am afraid.

Now you see, I concluded that this was just a bent of mind into which she had got herself over the years.

And she just couldn't get out of it. But it was absolutely a problem. Well, there are some people who are always in this perpetual darkness.

[12 : 06] They never seem to come to assurance at all. They're always in this darkness, this doubting frame of mind. Now doubting is our weakness in one's faith.

It shows the imperfection of faith. It doesn't say when you doubt that you haven't a weak faith. Peter had weak faith when he began to seek.

And Jesus said, why do you doubt? As if he said, have you any reason to doubt? But he doubted. And he sank. But he had weak faith.

Jesus said so. Oh, you have a little faith. Now, if he had had strong faith, he wouldn't have doubted. And if you had strong faith in Jesus, you wouldn't doubt your interest in Christ either.

It's because of the weakness of the faith that you doubt your interest in Christ. There is no doubt in heaven. Never will be.

[13 : 19] And the reason for that is the perfection of those who are there. It is not what they're seeing.

They're seeing angels. And they're seeing the perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is not because of what they're seeing that they're not doubting.

But because they themselves are testicked in themselves. Supposing you were to see Christ in the flesh.

Or supposing you were to get a vision of angels. Do you think that would keep you from doubting? Well, I don't think it would. How could that keep you from doubting if the word of God doesn't keep you from doubting?

If the word of God doesn't keep you from doubting, nothing else can keep you from doubting. If what you read here, infallibly, inspired by his Holy Spirit, is not enough, well, anything that you would see with your natural eyes would not be enough either.

[14 : 33] Now, many people think that doubting is an evidence of grace. Well, it is not an evidence of grace.

And it should never be taken as an evidence of grace. Some people never seem to have any other evidence than that. Now, this is particularly true of West Coast people.

And I know this to my cost. I must say. When I was a young Christian, it was during a time of revival, under the ministry of the late Reverend, Roderick John MacLeod.

There were lots of us young people brought in, as we say, in that revival. And we were as happy as the day was long. The Son of God was shining in our tabernacle.

And we were full of the joy of the Lord. Now, there were the older people, and many of them would say to us, Ah, but you wait.

[15 : 43] When they would talk to us, you would never get them to say that they were sure. They would say, we would never be sure until we reach the other side, until we were brought, taken into heaven.

And do you know that psychologically, they bend us to their own way of thinking. And to this day, I can hardly shake myself of it, many a time.

It has followed me like a shadow all my life. Now, I owe to these dear old people who have long since gone to glory, a debt that I can never take.

But I maintain, and will maintain, that in that particular aspect, they were wrong. They took it that if you were sure of your interest in Christ, there was something wrong with you.

And that if you doubted your interest in Christ, then it was an evidence of grace. Well, now friends, in that, I believe and I'm sure they were absolutely mistaken.

[16 : 50] And it is characteristic of Highland, the Highland way of Christian living, and particularly of the West Coast.

Now, this is displeasing to God. God is not pleased with anyone who doesn't believe. And I might say that it is unreasonable. It is unreasonable to doubt.

And we must remember that. You see, it's just as reasonable to doubt without evidence, as it is to believe without evidence.

Now, you can't believe without evidence, without sure evidence. It is presumption to believe without sure evidence.

That's folly. Presumptuous folly. If I ask you to believe anything, well, it's only reasonable that you should ask what my evidence is.

[17 : 57] On what do I base my statement? Are many of you sure of the evidence? You believe me. And indeed, you shouldn't believe me, unless I'm able to give you evidence.

Appalled with what I say. Now, the same thing is true of doubt. Why do you doubt? You should not doubt unless you have evidence that you should doubt.

Remember that. No people doubt without having any evidence, except the evidences of the Lord. Take care. Well, of course, although sometimes the very best of believers tend to doubt.

It is momentary. It is not their habitual way of thinking. They don't endure it in it. They don't cherish it.

And look upon it as evidence. It's a pain to them. But it's theirs. The words of John Newton are often quoted. To the point I long to know, oft it causes anxious thought, do I love the Lord as no?

[19 : 10] Am I his or am I not? Then he goes on to say, if I really, or sing, or pray, sin is mixed with all I do.

You who love the Lord indeed, tell me, is it best with you? Now, my friends, that's nice poetry. But it's absolutely nonsensical.

For a Christian man to talk like that. This is what I'm saying, that one should have evidences for doubting. Listen to what he says.

If I read, or sing, or pray, sin is mixed with all I do. Now, here comes the ridiculousness of a sentiment.

You who love the Lord indeed, tell me, is it best for you? Or what else is it going to be with us? Aren't we worried, we people? Aren't we people just like you said?

[20 : 10] Surely he should have known that sin dwells in every believer. Surely he should have known that whenever a believer prays, and reads, and sings, or whatever it does for the Lord, sin is mixed with it.

Why then did he ask the question? Ah, it's nice poetry, but it's unreasonable. You see, we must not just go by these things without examining them.

And there the good man, the good John Newton, was quite wrong. Now you see, believers are apt to fall into this, into this very same pit.

I mean, the best day believers, in every age, were apt to fall into this same pit. Certainly, there are times when we might well doubt.

See, we ought to doubt at times, just as we ought to believe at times. There are times when, if we fail the means in which we should succeed, if we let down that which we should afford, it is not only, it would not only be presumption to believe, it would be wrong not to doubt against the ground.

[21 : 36] What I mean is this, if anyone lives in deliberate sin, from day to day, and week to week, that man has every reason to doubt if he is a Christian.

That's what I mean. There are times when we ought to doubt if these things are true of us. And living in deliberate sin is a reason for doubting.

And a good one at that. If we live in negligence of the means of grace, then we have every reason to doubt if we are Christians or not.

After all, my friends, if we live in deliberation publicly, then everybody else would doubt if we are Christians. and we ought to agree with them.

We ought to do it ourselves. Because nobody would believe that we are Christians if we are living in deliberate sin. And nobody would believe that we are Christians if we are neglecting the means of grace habitually.

[22 : 48] They won't believe it. It doesn't matter what we say. And we shouldn't believe it ourselves either. We just shouldn't. If we get quite happy neglecting the means of grace.

Well, my word, if we neglect the means of grace, what evidence have we got that we are grace? We have no evidence at all. Because that is one of the main evidences.

If we are willfully disobedient, then we have no reason to believe that we are saved. We have never recently believed that we are not.

For willfully disobedience is an evidence. that we should don't. Now, these are things which can and which ought to cause difficulty.

But I was going to mention something here before I come to the next point. I was going to mention that sometimes the very best would believe if in the mysteries of providence don't the promises of God.

[23 : 53] Now, my friends, you ought to worry if you do that. I'm not going to say that it's a good thing. I'm going to say that it's an evil thing, a bad thing, a thing dishonoring and displeasing to God.

But I'm going to say this. Life being what it is and the human heart being what it is, I believe that every single child of God sometimes goes through an experience in which he cannot grasp the promise of God that is relevant to his present situation.

See, there are times of darkness. You find this in the Bible. You find it among the prophets. You find it among the ancient saints.

They say, well, if this is this, if this is true, why then should that be like that? And then they're afraid that God will leave them.

That God will take his spirit away from them. That God will not be with them in a time. Now, my friends, this is not to be commanded. And if you like that tonight, try and get out of it as soon as you can.

[25 : 07] But what I'm saying, and I'm saying it for your comfort, I'm not saying it so that you lie upon it as I beg. I'm saying it to get you out of it as quickly as possible.

But what I'm saying is, don't doubt because spasmodically you question the promise of God. Because you don't see its irrelevancy to yourself in your present state.

Because your soul is cast doubt within you, and you don't see light, and you don't see truth. The sound was the same way. There are these mysterious promises.

But of course we shouldn't doubt because of these things. We shouldn't doubt because of the power of God. That is one reason why we should not doubt.

Which would be easier just now for Peter say, he was there on the Sea of Galilee, which is not a very big sea. Anyway, it's called the sea.

[26 : 11] Now, which would be more possible for him, without the help of God, to walk from one side to the other, or to take one step on the water?

Now, turn it the other way. Which would be easier for him, with the help of God, to walk from one side to the other, or to take one step?

if God, I can't take a step on water without sinking. That's the law of nature. If I try to cross that river when it's in spade, or when the tide is, well, I'm going to go down.

Naturally. But, if God could take me across the river, as in I were walking on the road, could He not also take me across the Atlantic Ocean?

If His power could enable me to take one step on water, couldn't the same power enable me to go from one side of the world to the other on water? Well, that's what faith believes.

[27 : 22] See, faith believes not in a small God, but in a great God. Faith believes not in a small power given small divine power, but in omnipotency.

All things are possible to Him that believe. I know, said Martha, that whatsoever thou would ask of God, even now, God will give it to him when her brother was married, dead.

Nothing is great. Then future providences sometimes cause us to doubt. We wonder what will come, and we fear that God's promise would not be fulfilled.

David had this, and he was a good man. And God had assured him that he would be king over his son. He was anointed king, and he assured him and gave him evidences that he was with him.

And then he said, one day I will fall into the hands of Saul. Now, that's one of the worst things he ever said. He had no right to say that.

[28 : 27] God had assured him that he wouldn't fall into the hands of Saul. But his fear seemed to crumble, and he gave way, and went into the land of the Philistines, another thing that he shouldn't have done.

But now, friends, sometimes doubting gets us that way. We feel that the God who has been with us all these years will at last fail us.

This is why sometimes Christian people are so afraid of death. And after all, my friend, although death is the last experience you will have in this world, death is by no means the most difficult experience that you will have had in your lifetime.

There are experiences in the world through which the people of God are going that require more faith on your part and mine than even to die. Well, if God has been with us all the time from the beginning in every experience that never failed us, why should we conclude that he's going to fail us in that?

Or rather, why should we clear that he will fail us in that? What do you doubt? And then sometimes we don't because we don't follow the experience of other people.

[29 : 46] We hear them talk. We get such a big opinion of them. You know, we think they're never down. We think they're never in the clouds or in the valleys.

We think they're always full of joy, full of enthusiasm, full of the love of Christ in their hearts. Sometimes people think, you have to book that minister.

See, they have to preach. They have to come into the pulpit to preach whatever they're feeling like. even if their soul is cast out within them. They still have to come and try and administer comfort to others.

Just the same as many a poor doctor have to come out maybe from a bed of flu. And he would need to be attentive to himself more than he should attend to anybody else.

And then the phone would ring and there was nobody else to go. And many doctors, I suppose, many a time when they get out of bed and administer something to somebody else what he himself was in greater need of it.

[30 : 51] For the ministers to do the same. He has to administer comfort. But you see, people get an opinion of others that they haven't to possess, which is a good thing in one way.

But, my friend, even if you cannot follow the experience of the people of God when I give an account of their confession, I can't follow the experience of Saul of Tashkos.

I can't follow the experience of Peter. If I was never converted, I was converted entirely dividend to John Newton. I would think that sisters were dividend.

I was never, I was never out in the ways of sin, in darkness, and swearing, and all manner of evil, as John Newton was.

He was a desperately wicked man, a right rabbit character almost. If the two states were different, the two experiences naturally were different, but I'm not going to conclude because I can't follow John Newton in his experience of confession that I'm not converted.

[31 : 57] It would be wrong on my part. Don't. For that reason. And then some people don't because of the consciousness they have of their own corruption. Or they say, if you only knew my evil thoughts, if you only knew the corruption that branches up and bubbles up in my life, if you only knew this pit, this love that I have in my heart, wickedness and corruption and inclination and evil thoughts and sometimes blasphemous thoughts and all sorts of things, and I would never even tell them to my nearest friend.

And I'm quite sure, I'm positive that no real child of God has anything approaching to this. Well, my friend, don't you doubt your interest in Christ, because we just simply don't know what the children of God are going through their own hearts, and you have no evidence to doubt, based on something that you don't know.

You don't know what goes on in my heart. Ah, but you say, I know perfectly where the thoughts I have don't go through your heart. Well, how do you know?

You don't beat my heart. You don't know what kind of thoughts I have. Very well, then, what I'm telling you is that you have no right to doubt your own interest, simply because you can't treat my heart.

That's only what you think. But you may be quite wrong, and you are quite wrong, if you think like that. After all, my James, we all have the same kind of thoughts.

[33 : 41] We all have the same kind of hearts. We all have. There is not all that much difference between us in that life. And some people say, but I doubted because of the hardness of my heart.

They say, once I was conscious of communion with Christ, once I was melted under the preaching of the world, once I seemed to get alone with God, but now when I go to church, I am as hard as the pew I am sitting on.

Nothing seems to touch me anymore. There is no melting of my heart in the public means. There is no tear coming from my eyes. And then I begin to hear that any tears I ever shed was just purely emotional.

That any experience I ever had was born in my own imagination. How is it, you say? How is it that if I was right years ago, that I am in this hard, icy state now, kept in by a spiritual frost that cannot seem to be melted by anything, not even by the word of God?

My friend, that is no reason to doubt. None at all. Other people are just the same. And after all, if you had not faith in Christ, surely you wouldn't be conscious of the hardness of your heart.

[35 : 15] There are some people whose hearts are as hard as an element and it doesn't worry them. They're not conscious of it. In fact, I suppose, if you talked to them, they would think that the lungs are bad after all.

And if this worries you, it is an evidence of pain. And I would take this further and say, and this would be my last demachronan, I would say, that not even falling into our sin is our reason why we should don't do it in Christ.

It is not. Take the list of scripture characters, the most holy of them all. Noah walked with God and he sinned.

Jacob was a good man and he sinned. Moses there never was his life and he sinned.

Abraham, the father of the faithful and he sinned. David demachronan after God's own heart and he sinned often, not only once, but often.

[36 : 29] Peter, the leader of the disciples, he sinned. No, friends, that is not the name it is.

For duty, it is not. What falling into sin should produce, and what it does produce in the Christian heart, he hates and exercise a sorrow and repentance, not duty.

do you mark that thing? If you falling into sin produces repentance and sorrow and grief, then have nothing to do with doubts.

Don't doubt because there is no repentance for sin, no sorrow for it, no grief for it, in an indigene heart. And if you have that, then I tell you, forget your doubts, cast them away, don't doubt.

Why do you doubt when you have an evidence, the greatest evidence in the Bible, that if you repent, then you are saved. Now what are the causes of these doubts?

[37 : 40] Just a word. I cannot go into this part of it at any length. Sometimes there's physical regret. Sometimes there's mental regret.

sometimes there's just born of no imagination. I think Kevin Minister of the Gospel who is in a lively congregation had to sit down with people who were tossed and torn with doubts.

And he knew all the time why he was giving them comfort. He knew that there was nothing real wrong with them but only their own silly and stupid imagination. The doctors are just the same.

They go I'm sure I'm quite sure of this and doctors are called to go to see people or people who think they are still come to see them and tell them of their helpings and the doctor must be patient and tactful and he knows perfectly where there is nothing really wrong with him he knows that well this is the same in a spiritual man I had to do it many a time people and I knew that really it wasn't a spiritual condition at all it was either physical or mental or imaginary or whatever you care to call it but it wasn't spiritual and sometimes it is caused by out grieving the Holy Spirit once we do that when we were cast into a cloud of darkness sometimes floating is caused because we think that we must feel better before we can believe

I can't believe in this state how am I going to believe in this state but my friends it's in that state you're going to believe Peter the Lord wanted Peter to believe not when he got into the ship but when he was still on the water that's when he should have believe he enough to believe once he got on board anybody could do that no friend don't you wait for right feelings to believe right feelings never produce faith but faith would produce right feelings do you get what I say I say if you wait in this state of doubt and you say I'm not going to believe until I feel better well you will never feel better but you believe in Jesus Christ get rid of yourselves heed the Lord's rebuke and then you feel better because faith will produce these things what does mean effectively well the effect of it is that it produces holiness and disobedience it produces a spirit of weakness it renders you so weak that you can't do anything but the

[40 : 50] Lord how can you doubt him it takes away the effectiveness of his prayers you are like the waves of the sea tossed to and floated not such a man think that he would get anything of the Lord if he is going to doubt he is not going to get anything from him it destroys his peace you won't be happy when you go to bed at night if you doubt not when you get up in the morning it disables you forever in duty what's the sense of my going out of the town and giving drugs to people and the hope that they would be saved if I it would make no sense now I want to give a word of encouragement don't despair don't despair ask

God to take your belief away ask God to remove these doubts from your mind your hope is not dead remember what the psalmist said my soul is cast out with him hope thou in God he didn't say even believe because faith is a strong regression matter for he didn't say then you love God he didn't even say that he loved him he said you just hope hope with God and as long as hope is not dead the soul is not dead hope will revive the soul and then it makes you wretched one day you get away if you are not happy with this bed fellow God will one day take him away and he will bring you to the light and you will see his righteousness and then if you want to get rid of those use the means of grace be obedient to the

Lord this is it see to it that it is not anything that you are gifted of that it is not your fault if you are in darkness of soul if you know and if it is just a spiritual experience God will take you out of it just as surely as the clouds go away from the sun or as the train comes out of the tunnel I have no time to warn against presumption to warn against people who don't doubt when they shoot down I leave that to themselves let a man examine himself to see whether he be in the day but all I have been trying to do tonight was to show you that you should never doubt your interest in Christ unless you have concrete evidence from the word of God that you have reason to do so examine the word and if the word says that if this is true of you then you are a

Christian or if the word says that if this is true of you then you are not a one or the other but for any things don't be busy your doubts any more than your faith on the things that you feel going on inside you let us pray worship of God do thou help us to overcome these things that are at work in our minds when these things are contrary to thee do thou bless us bless us by giving us the joy of uninterested Christ knowing whom we have believed and knowing that he will keep that which we have committed unto him against the day of judgment go before us all take us safely to our homes be with us in all things that we do for thee for Jesus sake Amen up for to tell what he for to prove welcome to to truth■ that and not tooria but