



# VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Wednesday Bible Study - 24:12:2008

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## **STUDY 4: THE DEBILITATIONS OF DOUBT AND UNBELIEF**

James 1:5-8

There are many hindrances to answered prayers but James, in his epistle to persecuted and suffering Christians emphasised on doubt and unbelief (wavering) as twin giant enemies. The import of the message can best be grasped when viewed in the context of suffering arising from temptation. Temptations and trials bring terrible pressures and sufferings that can be very taxing on the physical, emotional and spiritual lives. Human beings are used to solving their problems so as to alleviate sufferings. The innate desire to be free from sufferings can itself bring the temptation to use shortcuts, employ cheap alternatives and accept second bests presented by the devil, which may actually lead one entirely out of the will and plan of God. The basic nature of man likes to avoid sufferings at all cost but the divine pathway to the mountain top may go through the valley of suffering, shame, sorrow and humiliation. It is for this reason believers need to pray for wisdom to handle their situations according to God's plan. In as much as believers do not invite trouble upon themselves, they cannot at the same time expect to wear the crown without a cross.

**THE CONSEQUENCES OF DOUBT AND UNBELIEF** James 1:5-8; Habakkuk 2:4; Hebrews 10:38; 11:6; Hosea 7:11-16; Genesis 49:3,4; Proverbs 24:10; Luke 18:8.

God, by principle, has determined that His righteous ones will live by their faith, and if they turn back, then His soul (God's) will have no pleasure in them. This is an established principle and there is nothing one can do to change it. One must either fit in and reap the benefits or fail to do so and automatically attract consequences. James described the character of the waverer and also specified their perils. The wavering person is likened to the wave of the sea which:

1. is driven and tossed here and there, up and down by winds of circumstances. Lacking inner stability and anchor of the soul, his actions and course are determined by extenuating circumstances.
2. rises one moment and falls the next. One minute he believes; another he does not. He says yes and then no to what God has promised, never really settled on either.
3. swells and sinks. He staggers, helpless in prayer. He is sometimes lifted up by faith and then thrown down again by distrust. He sometimes mount towards the heavens with an intention to secure glory, honour and immortality, and then sinks again in seeking ease of the body, or the enjoyments of this world.

These render him "a double minded man" - one torn between carnal and spiritual things; who would neither give up the world nor heaven. An author pointed out that "Double-mindedness is a common disease that leaves its victims paralysed by doubt... hesitant, hypocritical, full of theoretical words, but lacking in confident action. Lots of talk but no guts. Insincere and insecure.... God deliberately holds back when the double-minded person prays". To such, James retorts: "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord". It is certain that a doubtful man will not get an answer as it is that the man of faith will get an answer. Doubt and unbelief generate fear which kills faith. It leads to carnality (Isaiah 50:10,11), instability (Hosea 7:11-16; Genesis 49:3,4; Psalms 46:1,5) and impatience that destroys steadfastness, integrity and sound mind. Besides it breeds discouragement, despair (Proverbs 24:10; Psalms 27:13), paralysis of action and ultimately backsliding. More often than not, the doubter / unbeliever take shortcuts (to disaster), settles down for second best and accepts cheap alternatives (Isaiah 50:10,11). Following lines of least resistance may ease the pressure for a while, but it will never produce a victor over circumstances. The wordings of this song should be the source of encouragement to all during moments of doubt or unbelief.

Be steadfast, unmovable; by faith stand your ground,  
Let the world not entice you, nor let error confound,  
For the Lord is your portion, His word is your guide,  
Be steadfast, unyielding and turn not aside.

**Your Spiritual Welfare Is Our Concern**

## **CASUALTIES OF DOUBT AND UNBELIEF**

One example is worth a thousand sermons. The bible is replete with examples of doubters and unbelievers who had to pay very dearly for it. We can benefit by careful examination of their pitfalls with the intent of avoiding such.

1. Israel's 40 years wandering in the wilderness was a direct consequence of their unbelief in the faithfulness and ability of God (Numbers 13 & 14:21-35). We can delay or even hinder the fulfillment of God's promises through unbelief.
2. The 2 ½ tribes settled in the wilderness (a cheaper alternative to the promised land) not only missed God's perfect will but also endangered their future (Numbers 32:1-6, 16-23 31-39; 26:1,2,7,18,34; Joshua 4:12,13; 22:10-34; I Chronicles 5:25-26; Judges 5:15-23). The decision to settle in the wilderness emanated from despair of ever inheriting the Promised Land. Unbelief makes one to give up too soon.
3. The murmuring and complain of Israel in the wilderness were the product of unbelief. Past miracles they experienced were not sufficient proof of God's ability to solve current problems (I Corinthians 10:1-12; Hebrews 4:1,2). Murmuring and complains are always indices of dissatisfaction and in God's plan and provision, through unbelief.
4. The young prophet lost his life through doubting God's word after being used of God. (I King 13:14-24). Unbelief and doubt lead to disobedience and walking by sight.
5. The king's "Aide de camp" lost his life because he expressed doubt over the promise of God through Elisha (II Kings 7:1,2,16-20). Unbelief promotes "intellectual reasoning" that cast doubt on God's word, thereby excluding the unbeliever from its benefits.
6. Saul lost the kingdom through impatience (I Samuel 13:5-14). He did not believe that continual total obedience to the God who made him king was essential to victory over all enemies and establishment of the kingdom. Doubt and unbelief lead to impatience, partial obedience and loss of divine favour / blessings.
7. Zacharias became dumb because he doubted God's answer to his prayers brought by the angel (Luke 1:5-20). Although a righteous and faithful prophet, he was not excused from becoming a casualty on doubting God.

And the list could continue on and on; but let these few register in our minds the danger of doubt and unbelief. God is God, and He can do anything, anytime, anywhere. "THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH..." "AND, WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD..." So when doubts or unbelief knocks, use these scriptures to confront them:

1. **"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread"** (Psalms 37:25).
2. **"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"** (Romans 8:28).
3. **"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it"** (I Corinthians 10:13).

This poem by Edgar A. Guest summarises the attitude a believer should adopt during temptations.

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,  
When the road you are trudging seems all uphill,  
When the funds are low and the debts are high,  
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,  
When care is pressing you down a bit,  
Rest if you must - but don't quit.

Life is queer with its twists and turns; As everyone of us sometimes learns,  
And many a failure turns about; When he might have won had he stuck it out;  
Don't give up, though the pace seems slow; You might succeed with just another blow...

Success is failure turned inside out; The silver tint of the clouds of doubt  
And you never can tell how close you are, It may be near when it seems afar.  
So stick to the fight when you are hardest hit; It's when things get worse that you mustn't quit.