Gracestoration Update

"Restoring People in God's Grace and Making Disciplers"

BOB AND DOTTIE (Connor) BINGHAM www.shepherdinggrace.org e-mail: info@shepherdinggrace.org VOLUME 19.2 June 2012

Faith vs. Unbelief/Doubt

Christians often talk about their faith in God and His willingness to help in the time of need in the third person and thus fail to enjoy His provision for them now. The following are some examples:

1. I know that God can meet my need, but **what if** I am not good enough?
2. I know that the Bible says that God is able to meet all of my needs, but **what if** it is not His will?
3. **What if** God is too busy with bigger issues to be concerned with me and my little problem?
4. **What if** God does not take care of me after divorce or the death of my spouse?

Consequently, they rule out any expectation for God to engage with them and their need right now. Thus they fail to turn to Him in their time of need.

It is an observable fact that most Christians believe that God has helped others in their time of need, but they are reluctant to trust God for His help in their time of need. They often say that the reason is that they do not deserve His help because they are not good enough or spiritual enough.

The prophet Jeremiah, often called the weeping prophet, suffered continually while faithfully preaching the message that God told him to deliver, namely, that the Israelites were not to resist the Babylonians, but cooperate with them and enter captivity. Most of them resisted this message from God choosing to fight the Babylonians and lose.

However, Jeremiah understood in his life of faith that God was his ever-present help in the here and now and not some time in the future. The following is one of his prayers, *"Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness. Surely my soul remembers and is bowed down within me. This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore I have hope in Him. The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him"* (Lam. 3:19-23).



Jeremiah did not enjoy his assignment from the Lord knowing it was contrary to public opinion. However, he willingly, in the midst of suffering, carried out his God-given job, always dependent upon God for His current provision and protection.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego are examples of present-tense faith. They would not bow down and worship the king's statue and as a consequence they were threatened to be thrown into the fire for disobedience to the king. Their answer was, *"O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king"* (Dan. 3:16-17).

In their suffering they knew that God would not fail to take care of them right then! Their **what if** question was that it was up to God *how* He might deliver them -- not whether He would or not.

Job is an example of one who believed that God was able to deliver him from his misery, but he did not expect God to take care of it now for him, *"As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth"*. His confidence in God's deliverance was future, *"Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God;'"* (Job. 19:25-26),

We call this attitude **doubt** and/or **unbelief.** The Scriptures speak a lot about this kind of doubting. Jesus asks, *"However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth"* (Lk. 18:8)? This is specifically speaking of faith in Him. Again, *"And He wondered at their **unbelief**"* (Mk. 6:6). *"And He did not do many miracles there because of their **unbelief**"* (Matt. 13:58).

Our Lord Jesus promised that He would never desert us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5). Jesus invites us to ask, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full"* (Jn. 16:23-24). *"Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do* I" (Jn. 14:13-14).

Do we believe and practice that God will answer our prayer of faith? Or are we doubtful saying that He can if He chooses?

This writer has discovered that along with the prayer of faith it is also proper to thank God at the time of prayer for His willingness to answer my prayer.

Prayer is the vehicle; God is the resource!

I also have found that the power is of God, not in the prayer itself. **Prayer is the vehicle; God is the resource!**

<>

A Testimony

For every step I try to take on my own I am humbled to find it goes nowhere. Every chance I take to pray and seek Christ's direction for my steps, I have been rewarded with true life --His life!

I have found that nothing can compare to the relief of surrender to Jesus Christ. What a scary subject, submission... The reward of submitting, truly closing your eyes and falling back into the arms of our creator for His leading, provision and protection, gives me peace. I am secure in Christ's provision and plan for me. As I submit to Christ's will, He showers me with more reward and satisfaction than anything I could dream up in my own mind.

I find when I am in control of my life I can easily have constant thoughts and worries of **"What if?"** I can think of many reasons for why I should keep pushing through life on my own plan, my goals, my agenda. I am continually met by this thought that only through the Lord Jesus have I experienced His rest. He knows why, I don't! I am able to be calm knowing that He understands me. He made me this way, he planned this life for me, and He knew of my attitude of wanting to do things my way.

I can keep futilely trying to climb this mountain of **"what if"** and try to do things my way, or I can choose to submit to Christ and enjoy His relief, presence and protection.

Join with me and allow Jesus Christ to live in your heart and home. He will pour His peace and calm into you and also to those around you like the rays of sun that come through the clouds after a thunderstorm.

--Submitted by a young mom

<>

The Minister as Shepherd

This year, 2012, marks the 100th anniversary of the book *The Minister as Shepherd* by Charles Jefferson. As you read it you would think it was written this year—not back in 1912. Please note this excerpt from page 72: *"Love cannot be satisfactorily expressed to our generation in printer's ink, in evangelistic appeals, in pulpit eloquence, or in doctrinal statements. The expression which the world now demands is the love of the shepherd who takes the lambs in his bosom, who gently leads those who have their young, and who day by day lays down his life for the sheep. A generation ago, the Word of God was the Bible, today the Word of God is Jesus and the man who has the spirit of Jesus. A genuine Christian is the only epistle which the world now cares to read."*

You may order a copy by mailing in the tear-off portion of the UPDATE with a gift of $10.00. You will be amazed at how it speaks to shepherds (and sheep) today! ✞