

Dealing with Doubt

“Are you the Expected One or do we look for another?”

Luke 7:19

Sometimes when we are weary in the battle of life we look around at other Christians and they seem to wear a perpetual grin on their faces and appear to live care free lives. We ask ourselves why we are so unspiritual as to let life get us down and doubting.

In our passage today we hear a message from the most spiritual and wonderful person in history up to Jesus' time. Jesus says so Himself. Yet this amazing man of God had some serious doubts about Jesus and sent friends to ask Him if He was really the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy or should they look for someone else.

The man who sent this message of doubt to Jesus is none other than John the Baptist, the older cousin to our Lord. John had fearlessly proclaimed to the crowds that attended his preaching that Jesus was the Lamb of God Who would take away the sins of the world. (John 1:29). John was very powerful as a witness to Jesus and had prophesied that Jesus would act in judgment and separate the wheat from the chaff. The chaff would burn in fire unquenchable.

For his bold preaching against the various sins in the life of king Herod and for naming the ruler and his wife as living in sin (Luke 3:19) he was imprisoned. He was suffering for truth in a dark and horrible prison cell. John was astute enough to know what trouble he was asking for by speaking in this manner but his loyalty to truth was worth more than the risk he took. It cost him dearly to be true to God and truth.

The king whom he insulted in public however, still liked to hear John preach and would call for him from time to time to speak with him (Mark 6:20). However the king's wife, Hero-

dias, had it in for John (Mark 6:19) and the reference in Matthew 17:12 which say they “did to him whatever they wished” may well refer to torments prior to his death.

The prison cell which was cold in the winter and hot in the summer was the perfect place to fall into a depression. Even the marvellous preacher of truth, so fearless when free, found the solitary confinement and privation too much to handle. All he heard about Jesus from his friends who were allowed to visit him occasionally was that the Lamb of God was highly popular and the crowds hung on His every word.

This, of course, had to puzzle John as he had prophesied that Jesus would act in judgment, not become the darling of the masses. His miserable circumstances got him down. He was captive and did not know his future. It is a mercy in life sometimes that we do not know our future. John likely heard that Jesus was attending parties thrown by the Pharisees John had denounced (Luke 5:29) and could not help but be puzzled by this strange behaviour of his younger cousin.

The disciples of John had come to Jesus to complain that He and his disciples did not fast as John and they did (Matthew 9:14). Jesus simply did not do as John predicted at the time John was imprisoned and so the darkness of depression fell on John. It is so sad when a person feels they have come to the end of the road and all they have done may be laid waste. Jesus had been reported to John as healing the sick, raising the dead and so on. Why could Jesus not get him out of prison?

John acted properly with his doubts and confusion. He brought them to Jesus Himself through his disciples. The sad question was put to Jesus

concerning who He was. The disciples doubtless wondered why Jesus had done nothing for John seeing that John had done so much for Jesus.

Jesus, when He heard the question apparently did not answer immediately but rather continued healing the sick and exorcising demons for some time (Luke 7:21). Then Jesus told the disciples to go and tell John about His healing ministry and the raising of the dead.

Jesus calls on people with doubts to observe His power over creation and thus fight the doubts. Elsewhere He said to doubters, “believe on account of the works themselves” (John 14:11). We are confident that this helped John simply because Jesus did it to assist His cousin. When John's disciples left Jesus finally gave eloquent testimony to John calling him the last and greatest of the prophets. John had testified many times concerning Jesus and now Jesus gave praise to John (Luke 7:24-28).

Sadly, John did not get released from prison, nor did he live to see his prophecies of his cousin come true. He died a martyr's death for his faith. Yet, when he died, he had the comfort that he had lived well and finished his course for his beloved Master.

Be like John and take your doubts to Jesus, then study His life and ministry. If you do and if your circumstances which made you doubt do not change, at least you will be assured you are in God's will and shall have the grace to be faithful to the end.

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