

The Conquest Of Doubt.

Text: Mat 14:22-33

Suggested Hymns:

396, 203, 127, 335, 402

- 1) The Disadvantage Of Doubt
- 2) The Advantage Of A Sure Faith
- 3) Some Reasons Why We Can Dismiss Doubts
- 4) How To Conquer Doubts

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 14:22-33, ²² *Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.* ²³ *And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.* ²⁴ *But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.*

²⁵ *Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea.* ²⁶ *And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.* ²⁷ *But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."*

²⁸ *And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."* ²⁹ *So He said, "Come."* *And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.* ³⁰ *But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"*

³¹ *And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"* ³² *And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.* ³³ *Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

There are few things in life of which we can be absolutely certain. Health is an uncertain thing; a sudden sickness may come upon us and quickly take away our health. Wealth, is an uncertain thing;

Scripture reminds us of the fact that “*riches make themselves wings and fly away.*”¹ Wisdom is an uncertain thing; those who trust in their own wisdom and skill are trusting in uncertain things.

Life itself is a very uncertain thing; no one of us can tell with any degree of assurance whether or not he will be alive tomorrow. In 1912 the gigantic ocean liner Titanic was built and was regarded as being unsinkable; but on its maiden voyage it struck an iceberg and sank in an incredibly short time.

While many a person, like the unfaithful watchmen (who is described in Isa. 56:12), is saying in secret to his heart, “*Tomorrow will be as today, And much more abundant,*” we are obliged to say to him in return, also in the words of Scripture, Proverbs 27:1, ¹ *Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.*

The question arises, Can anything certain and reliable be known in the field of religion? Is the Christian religion true and trustworthy, or is it merely a collection of fables and fairy-tales that have no basis in fact and that are not worthy of serious consideration on our part?

Must we be in doubt and in uncertainty about the truths of the Christian religion, or can we be sure about our religious beliefs? To reassure ourselves of the truthfulness and trustworthiness of the Christian religion, let us consider the topic of *The Conquest of Doubt*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Disadvantage Of Doubt

To be in doubt about important matters of our everyday life is a serious disadvantage for a person. It is certainly a disadvantage for a person to be in doubt whether he has invested money in valuable securities or in worthless ones.

It is certainly a disadvantage for a tourist in an unfamiliar country to be in a quandary whether he ought to turn right or left in order to reach his destination.

What misery a wife experiences as long as she is in doubt about the safety of her “husband who has been trapped by a cave-in in a coal mine! The author of doubt is Satan; hence there cannot be anything good about doubt.

In our text we can see the serious situation into which Peter the Apostle was plunged by his doubts. Recall also the story of the doubt of Moses in exodus Chapter 4, *but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.* Or of Gideon in Judges

chapter 6:11 onwards when Gideon said, ***“O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?”*** Or of the disciples in the storm on the Sea of Galilee.² Their doubts put them into a serious dilemma.

If it is a disadvantage for a person to be in doubt about earthly things, then it is a much more serious matter for a person to be in doubt about the truths of the Christian religion. A person who is bothered by religious doubts can have no real calmness of heart, no real peace of mind, no feeling of safety and security, but he must live in a state of bewilderment and uneasiness.

In his distress he must say with Pontius Pilate, ***“What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?”***³ and with the jailer at Philippi, ***“What must I do to be saved?”***⁴

2. The Advantage Of A Sure Faith

How encouraging and inspiring it is, on the other hand, for a person to have a certain and a firm faith! How reassuring and uplifting it is for a person to be filled with definite and positive Christian convictions! The Lord sharply condemns doubt and strongly commends faith. Oh, how often did the Lord complain about the lack and the want of firm faith among men! To those who pray in doubt, the Lord says in James 1:6-7, ***“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.***

To Peter sinking into the waters of the Sea of Galilee the Lord said in our text ***“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”*** To Thomas, who refused to believe in the Lord’s resurrection unless he actually saw the risen Redeemer with his own eyes, the Saviour said, ***“Be not faithless, but believing.”***⁵

But whenever Jesus did find a person with a strong faith, how joyfully the Lord acclaimed and commend that person’s faith by saying, as He did to a woman of Canaan, ***“O woman, great is your faith,”***⁶ or as He said about the centurion’s faith, ***“Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!”***⁷

A person who has a firm faith can say with Job, in Job 19:25-27, ²⁵ ***For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth;*** ²⁶ ***And***

after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God,²⁷ Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

And with Paul the Apostle, 2 Timothy 1:12,¹² *For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.*

We can say with Martha of Bethany,⁸ *“Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”* “It is a good thing that the heart be established by grace.”⁹

Although the world of our day is filled with many serious doubts and uncertainties, we Christians do not need to be in any doubt whatsoever about the truths of the Christian religion. We can be certain; we can be sure. Of what beliefs and teachings may we Christians be sure?

Why, we can be sure of all the things that are written on the indelible pages of the Holy Bible. We can be sure of the reality of God. We read in Romans 1:19-20 that *what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.*²⁰ *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.*

We can be sure of the preservation and the protection of God in our daily lives. We read in Joshua 1:9, *Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.* We can be sure of the deity of Jesus Christ. We read in Colossians 2:9,⁹ *For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*

We can be sure of the fact that our sins have been wiped away by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We read in Galatians 3:13,¹³ *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”).*

We can be sure of the way of salvation, John 3:16,¹⁶ *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

If you believe in Jesus for all that He claimed to be and for all that the Bible says of Him, you can be sure that we have been elected or predestined by God to eternal life, Romans 10:9, *if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

3. Some Reasons Why We Can Dismiss Doubts

Every Christian can and should be filled with firm Christian certainty and conviction about the truths of the religion of God, because, it is the religion which Jesus Himself taught. Most people regard Jesus as the Great Teacher, the Model Man, the beloved Benefactor of the World, the Divine Physician. No one, except perhaps a few disgruntled critics of Christianity, regards Him as a fraud or as an impostor.

Everyone looks on His teachings and tenets with some respect. He Himself has said in John 8:31-32, *“If you [continue] in My word, you are My disciples indeed.”* ³² *“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* ... If it were not so, I would have told you.¹⁰ ... *“For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”*¹¹ Shall we accuse Jesus of misrepresentation? We know that He was Truth personified and that there never was another man of such absolute honesty and sincerity. We can take His Word at face value. Scripture says in Psalm 34:8, *Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!*

A famous historian of the Reformation period relates the fact that in his student days he was seriously bothered by doubts about the Christian religion. He went to a minister with a list of his troubles. But the minister told him, *“If I were to rid you of your doubts and difficulties, others would soon arise. There is a simpler way of getting rid of your vexations. Let Jesus Christ really be the Son of God and the divine Saviour to you, and no doubts will be able to disturb the serenity of your mind.”*

The person who comes to the Lord Jesus Christ and says,¹²

Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd’st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

will find that the Lord will erase his doubts and will fill his heart with a sure faith.

Jesus Himself once said, as we read in Matthew 21:21-22, *“Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done.”*²² *“And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”*

Every Christian can and should be filled with firm Christian certainty and conviction about the truths of the religion of God also because it is the religion which the Bible teaches.

The Bible, that Book which has never taught a falsehood, though it has frequently, but never successfully, been charged with errors and inaccuracies, was written *“that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.”*¹³ We read in John 20:31,³¹ *“but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”*

Here is a true and a trustworthy witness to the certainty of the Christian religion: the Bible. We can accept its statements without doubt and without question. It has stood the test of time and of sharp criticism. It tells us in Romans 15:4,⁴ *“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”*

The science of botany informs us that a certain marine plant rises from a depth of more than one hundred feet and floats upon the surface of the sea. The stem of this plant is not more than an inch thick, but it is able to withstand the violent breakers and waves of the turbulent sea. How can this thin plant successfully resist the fury of the storms at sea? The secret is that it anchors itself deep down in the solid bed of the ocean.

A person who likewise bases and builds his faith and his hope upon the solid foundation of the Word of God builds upon the rock that cannot move.

4. How To Conquer Doubts

How can we overcome any doubts that we may have? The story of Scripture which we are considering teaches us the fact that we can overcome doubts simply by accepting the Word of the Lord in full faith.

Paul the Apostle overcame his doubts and became persuaded of the truth of the Christian religion, not by relying upon his own feelings, ideas, knowledge, opinions, reasoning, powers, or wisdom, but simply by accepting the Word of the Lord.

An unwavering acceptance of the Word of the Lord will dissolve our doubts. The Lord assures and convinces and persuades us of the truth of Christianity by means of His holy Word. *“Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.”*¹⁴

In the story of Jesus about the rich man and Lazarus we are told that the rich man who was in the place of torments wanted God to send his five brothers on earth something more than the simple Word of God. But God told him, *“They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.”*³⁰ *“And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’*³¹ *“But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’* In other words, the hearing and the reading of the Word of God produces in our hearts and minds a certainty and a conviction about the truth of God’s religion.

Recall the story of Apollos, Acts 18:24-28, ²⁴ *Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.* ²⁵ *This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.* ²⁶ *So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.*

²⁷ *And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace;* ²⁸ *for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.*

Somebody once asked Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the famous British poet, “Is Christianity true?” The poet answered that question with two little words, “Try

it.” A Hindu, who was a convert to Christianity, once declared, “If I were a missionary, I would not argue the question of religion; I would give people the New Testament and say, “*Read that.*”

If we hear and read the Word of God again and again, it will take hold of us with divine power and enable us to say with the Apostle Paul, Romans 8:38-39, ³⁸ ***For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

If you can say those words with Paul, you have made the greatest conquest of your life. Do not doubt, but firmly believe the words that the Lord speaks to you, and you will be able to go about your daily tasks with a song in your heart and with a smile on your lips in the certain knowledge that God is your heavenly Father, your divine Redeemer, and your precious Comforter.

In these times of doubt and uncertainty it is, indeed, reassuring and encouraging to know that with the Lord beside us as we sail the sea of life, we can conquer every doubt. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Proverbs 23:5

² Matt. 8:23

³ Matthew 27:22

⁴ Acts 16:30

⁵ John 20:27

⁶ Matthew 15:28

⁷ Matthew 8:10

⁸ John 11:27

⁹ Hebrews 13:9

¹⁰ John 14:2

¹¹ John 18:37

¹² Hymn 335

¹³ 1 Corinthians 2:12

¹⁴ 1 Thessalonians 1:5