

# Doubts That Do Not Damage

Luke 1:5-22, 62-64

# Doubts That Do Not Damage

- Confidence in the scriptures and in our ability to read and understand them is critically important to spiritual success.
  - We are robbed of stability in our belief and practice.
  - We will be without the means or the confidence to save others who have fallen victim to false doctrine.
  - We will be without the ability or the drive to proclaim the good news of salvation from sins and the promise of a home in heaven.
  - We will lose what makes the Lord's Church unique and distinct from man-made religions.

# Doubt Is Universal

- Luke 1:5-22, 62-64
- Every honest person has struggled with doubt.
  - Abraham tried to make Eliezer and Ishmael his heir.
  - Gideon the Judge tested the angel of the Lord.
  - Asaph the Psalmist nearly told people to give up on God.
  - Elijah ran away and hid in a cave.
  - Jeremiah questioned God's instructions at every turn.
  - Zacharias, priest and father of John the Baptist, doubted the word of an angel sent from God.

# Doubt Is Universal

- “Believe in God, and you will have to face hours when it seems obvious that this material world is the only reality; disbelieve in Him, and you must face hours when this material world seems to shout at you that it is not all. No conviction religious or irreligious will, of itself, end once and for all this fifth-columnist in the soul. Only the practice of faith resulting in the habit of faith will gradually do that.” (C. S. Lewis, *“Focal Point,”* July-September, 1989)

# Doubt Is Universal

- Doubt comes in varying degrees.
- The doubt of the proud skeptic who delights in his own intellect.
  - Psalm 14:1 - “The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.”

# Doubt Is Universal

- The doubt of the person who wants to believe, but is struggling with difficult questions.
  - John 7:17 - “If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.”

# Doubt Is Universal

- The doubt of the believer who has taken his eyes off the Lord in a difficult trial.
  - Matt. 8:25-26 - “Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, ‘Lord, save us! We are perishing!’ 26 But He said to them, ‘Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?’ Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.”
  - Mark 9:22-24 - “And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us. 23 Jesus said to him, ‘If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.’ 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, ‘Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!’”

# Doubt Is Universal

- What can Zacharias teach us about dealing with doubt?
  - Zacharias and his wife, Elizabeth, prayed for a son.
  - He resigned himself to his view of reality; they were too old.
  - He believed this to the point of doubting the word of an angel of God.



# Doubt Even Besets The Righteous

- Luke 1:6 - “And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.”
- Matt. 11:2-6 - “And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples 3 and said to Him, ‘Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?’ 4 Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: 5 The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. 6 And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.’”
- Gen. 17:17 - “Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, ‘Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?’”

# Doubt Even Besets The Righteous

- Doubt is universal. More relevant questions are:
  - What kind of doubt am I experiencing?
  - What is the source of my doubt?

# Doubt Even Besets The Righteous

- Doubt does not come from a lack of evidence.
- Consider Zacharias' reaction to the angel:
  - Luke 1:12, 18 - "And Zacharias said to the angel, 'How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.'"

# Doubt Even Besets The Righteous

- God has spoken and given sufficient evidence.
  - Luke 16:27-31 - “Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, 28 for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ 29 Abraham said to 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.’”

# Doubt Even Besets The Righteous

- Philip had seen Jesus perform miracles, and yet he couldn't imagine how the Lord would resolve feeding the multitude.
  - John 6:5-7 - “Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?’ 6 But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. 7 Philip answered Him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.’”

# Doubt Even Besets The Righteous

- The disconnect happens within us.
  - We forget the power of God, we forget the wisdom of God, we forget the consistent promise keeping of God, and we forget the record of the proofs of God's love and care.
  - We have allowed other things to block our view: we judge the difficulty of the problem based on our ability to solve it, or by what we know of the limits of life in this world.

# Doubt Even Besets The Righteous

- Doubt is often connected with disappointments or long-term trials.
  - Acts 12:12-15 - “So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. 13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. 15 But they said to her, ‘You are beside yourself!’ Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, ‘It is his angel.’”

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- Concluding Lesson:
  - The Solution to Doubt
  - God Gives Us Power To Overcome Our Doubts
- Isaiah 35:3-10