

## Repentance Leads To Christ-like Character

### The Sins of Doubt and Distrust In God

*“I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but trusts that what he says will happen, it will be done for him”*

(Mark 11:23).

Do you realize that when you doubt God in any way or distrust His amazing love for you no matter what circumstances in which you find yourself, you are grieving His tender and gracious heart by your sin? Our God created all things; by His very will each and every person and element He has made are kept in existence (John 1:3). How can He *not* be trusted?

Some find it easier to believe in God as a distant deity “way out there” Who benignly supervises all He has created but keeps His hands off, so to speak. They find it much more challenging, however, when their belief system is called to make the leap into a life of *personal trust*.

The *Father-child trust* our God requires of His own who share the spiritual intimacy of being indwelt by the Spirit of Christ is sadly foreign to so many who call themselves Christians. Overcome by memories of past pain or present tragedy, they can’t trust a Love that is beyond any limits of height or breadth or depth. While they believe that He exists, their lives demonstrate independence and dogged striving that dispel any certainty that He is indeed worthy of all their trust.

The Book of Hebrews  
*TRUST is your unwavering  
confidence in your heavenly Father*

Our Father is in the midst of bringing about a *Hebraic* Restoration of love-grounded obedient trust, and what better place to understand what He means by trust than the Book of Hebrews? Let’s look at some of the commands of both confidence and warning in this passage sampling, recognizing that whenever you see the words “*Let us*”, the writer is speaking a *command* from the heart of your Father.

**3:6** “*Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house. And we are His house, IF we hold fast our confidence...*” That word “confidence” literally means having absolute certitude until the very end of your life.

**10:23** “*Let us hold fast to the hope we profess, for He Who promised is faithful.*” This imperative command leaves no room for doubt in the One Who has made such precious promises to those who hope in Christ alone as their reconciler and Lord.

**10:35** “*Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.*” The certainty of your confidence brings a great reward which you’ll partake of when you see Jesus face to face.

**4:16** “*Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*” Notice the holy boldness with which we’re told to approach our Lord. There’s no room for either doubt when you’re desperately seeking the gift of His grace.

**10:38,39** “*But My righteous one will live by trust. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who trust to the saving of the soul.*” Drawing back from God’s good purposes and plans for you because of doubt or distrust evokes displeasure from our loving God. In fact, drawing back brings *destruction*, which literally

means exclusion from salvation.

**12:1-3** “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, **let us throw off everything that hinders** and the sin that so easily entangles, and **let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our trust, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him** who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will **not grow weary and lose heart.**” As we follow the Biblical pattern of *casting off* sinful attitudes, words and behaviors, we can then run with perseverance focusing on the only One Who brings us victory—Jesus, the Source of our trust. Our natural tendency is to get so downhearted and weary that all we can see is our painful situation and our hopelessness.

That’s when *doubt* blankets your trust and crushes your hope. But because the Spirit of Christ dwells in you, you’re precious to our Father. So draw strength and encouragement from the reality of His love—and believe what His Word tells you!

**6:4-6** “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have **tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame**” Note that it’s *followers of Jesus* who are being warned here. If you decide to forsake His Lordship in your life after having once been indwelt by the Holy Spirit, you’ve *stopped trusting God*—and according to this passage, it’s impossible for you to repent.

### What Do Doubt and Distrust Look and Feel Like?

The apostle Thomas had walked with Jesus for over three years. Yet he serves as an example of one who *doubted* that the promise of Jesus to rise again would be fulfilled. That doubt led to *distrust*, thankfully a condition which was altered by sight. Thomas wasn’t present when our Lord first appeared to the other apostles in the locked chamber. But so doubting was he that he arrogantly announced, “Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe it.”

A week later Jesus appeared again to His disciples. This time He pointedly addressed the apostle who had not trusted He was the Risen Lord: “Put your finger here; see My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. **Stop doubting and trust.**” Thomas said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen Me, you have trusted; **blessed are those who have not seen and yet have trusted**” (John 20:24-29).

That message of *trust that brings blessing* was intended for all of us as well, since none of us has yet seen our beloved Lord in person. The essence of trust is clearly defined in Hebrews 11:1: “Now trust is **being confident in what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.**”

The strong influence of empirical science on this society is evident by its underlying principle: *believe only what you can see and prove by scientific methods.* Yet that misplaced confidence in the limited ways of science excludes an entire part of the world around us: the *unseen world* which includes the Holy Spirit, angels, and demons.

[For more on this unseen world, see our video series, *Certain of What We Do Not See*, free at our website.]

Our Lord is so utterly worthy of the intensity of trust and confidence He calls for in those who are His own! Perhaps you, however, do find yourself subject to symptoms of doubt and distrust. Please use the list below to examine your own heart and identify anything that might be hindering your relationship of loving trust in your Father and Lord Jesus.

### Symptoms of Doubt and Distrust

- **Suspicious** You're plagued by a sense of caution in regard to trusting God wholeheartedly.
- **Apprehensive** You're anxiously fearful that your Father won't fulfill His plans for your good, or that He "has it in for you" because so many things are going wrong in your life.
- **Indecisive & Double-minded** You anguish over decisions, worried that your Father will let you stumble and fall if you choose wrongly.
- **Skeptical** You display an ongoing pattern of questioning and hesitancy in regard to doing the will of your heavenly Father.
- **Distorted Judgment** You make decisions without waiting for and seeking His Spirit's guidance.

**If a persistent pattern of doubt and distrust of your heavenly Father keeps you from obeying His Spirit and His Word, you've given up being His trusting child.**

Let's examine several sources of doubt and distrust in our heavenly Father.

#### **1. Distrust of your earthly father prompts distrust of your heavenly Father.**

We've met only a few dads whose children don't hold *something* against them in their fathering. Whether his failures are real or misperceived, his children just don't trust him. Sadly, this distrust taints a relationship with our heavenly Father

which is *founded* on trust. Unresolved issues toward your earthly father will always hinder the child-like trust your heavenly Father so richly deserves (Malachi 4:5,6; Matthew 18:3; Luke 10:21,18:16).

[For more, see the video *The Way of the Lord*, Lesson 24. Passive Aggression: An UnChristlike Response (Part 1).]

#### **2. Distrust often results when you misunderstand how our Father uses suffering in your life to help you become more like our Lord Jesus.**

In this pleasure-bent society it may be hard to wrap yourself around the truth that our Father *uses suffering* to develop Christ's character in you even as His Spirit fills you with His love. One goal for suffering is to produce *hope* in you—the solid confidence you can have in your relationship with your Father through Jesus:

*"We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, Whom He has given us"* (Romans 5:3-5; see also 1Peter 1:6-9; 2:21; 4:12-17).

The writer to the Hebrews also makes clear the necessity of painful discipline and *responding correctly to it* if we're to be counted as children whose lives emanate righteousness and peace:

*"Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it"* (Hebrews 12:7,11).

[For more, see Part 4 of *The Gospel of the Covenant Is the Pilgrimage to Salvation*.]

**3. You display distrust when someone holds you responsible to obey God but you respond with volumes of words or speak in vague generalities.**

Numbers of Christians mask over their doubt and distrust in God by hiding behind *acquiring Bible knowledge*. They can readily recite verses but have little or no testimony of actually *putting it into practice* out of obedience and love. Their doubt and distrust in their Father often gets exposed when someone else in the faith holds them accountable to obey something they know God is requiring of them. Most often they just verbally motor on, controlling the conversation and disallowing any input.

They may also shift from acknowledging the specifics they're being encouraged to follow through on, to mouthing generalities that have nothing to do with the topic at hand. It's no small thing that our Lord tells us, *"For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks"* (Matthew 12:34). The words of someone who has confident trust in their heavenly Father are entirely different from the person who doubts.

[For more, see the strongholds of Fear & Insecurity in our book, *Demolishing Strongholds*, a free download at our website.]

***"Now trust is being confident of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see"*** (Hebrews 11:1).

Your trust in your heavenly Father must also include relying on the indwelling Holy Spirit and on our Father's faithfulness to send angelic helpers on your behalf. As an example, at one point the prophet Elisha and his servant were surrounded by the troops of Aram:

*"Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. 'Don't be afraid,' the prophet answered. 'Those who are with us are more*

*than those who are with them.'* And Elisha prayed, *'O LORD, open his eyes so he may see.'* Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (2Kings 6:14-17).

In this account, our Lord revealed angelic forces who fight for His people. We today face unseen foes yet overcome them through the Spirit of Christ in us: *"You, dear children, are of God and have overcome [enemy spirits], because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world"* (1John 4:4).

Not only does the indwelling Spirit of Jesus empower His own; angelic beings also come alongside us in ways of which we're usually unaware: *"Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"* (Hebrews 1:14). Your loving and compassionate Father knows your weaknesses and is sovereignly bringing about whatever is needed for you to grow in the character of His Son. YOUR part is to trust wholly in Him!

Any wavering through doubt and distrust is sin, something for which you need to authentically repent. Putting off your need to repent or denying you even need to may lead you to a time when it's impossible for you to do so (Hebrews 6:4-6; 2Peter 2:17-22). We encourage you to prayerfully read through the entire Book of Hebrews, and discern how crucial is *trust* in your heavenly Father and your glorious Lord for your salvation.

***"As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For He says, 'In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.' I tell you, NOW is the time of God's favor, NOW is the day of salvation"*** (2Corinthians 6:1,2).