

## MATTHEW 28:16, 17 BUT SOME DOUBTED

“The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.”<sup>1</sup>

This is shocking! The eleven disciples obeyed the command Jesus had given. Some women had gone to the tomb in order to prepare His body for burial. There hadn't been time after the crucifixion, and they hoped to be able to assuage their grief by fulfilling the funerary rites. When they arrived at the tomb, they didn't find His body. Instead, an angel addressed them, commanding them to take a message to His disciples. They reported that the angel said, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you” [MATTHEW 28:5-7].

The strange events weren't finished, however. The women reported that Jesus Himself met them and spoke to them. Then, He iterated the message that the angel had delivered to them, He said, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me” [MATTHEW 28:10].

The guards were already bruited about the city a wild story that His disciples came during the night and stole His body away while they slept. Never mind that guards who fell asleep while on post were guilty of a capital offence. If they were actually sleeping, they were to be executed—there could be no appeal. It was apparently worth the risk in their estimate if sufficient money was to change hands.

The disciples had nothing to lose, so the eleven did as they were commanded and went to Galilee. The trip would get them out of the city where things were tense and they could explode into a riot at any moment. The disciples followed the instructions precisely, arriving at the mountain to which He had previously directed them. There, they saw Jesus; it was actually the Lord who came to them. When they saw Him, all of them worshipped. However, even as they worshipped, some doubted. Think of that! Some doubted despite seeing the Risen Saviour!

Before you begin to think ill of the disciples, recall how Thomas had reacted when the others spoke of seeing the Lord. This is the account of that incident that John, Jesus' cousin, recorded. “On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.’

“Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So, the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.’

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

**MATTHEW 28:16, 17**  
**BUT SOME DOUBTED...**

“Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’” [JOHN 20:19-29]. What can this mean?

**SALVATION REQUIRES BELIEVING** — No one is set free from sin through their own effort. Those who are saved from sin must believe in Christ as Lord of life. A jailer convicted by the courage of his former prisoners, asked them what was necessary for him to be saved; the erstwhile prisoners replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” [ACTS 16:31].

Believing the Son of God is the message John delivered as he defined what is required for salvation. “Whoever believes in [the Son of God] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” [JOHN 3:18]. This truth is iterated when John writes, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him” [JOHN 3:36].

The Gospel of John might well be called the Gospel of Belief because of the emphasis on believing. As I read the opening chapters recently, I was struck by the constant reference to believing. The Baptist “came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him” [JOHN 1:7], that is, through “the Word.”

John continued his prologue by declaring that those “who did receive [the Word], who believed in His Name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” [JOHN 1:12, 13].

Nathanael, one of the first of Jesus’ disciples, believed because Jesus saw him under a fig tree [see JOHN 1:43-51]. What is important to note is that he believed because of what Jesus said!

Jesus’ disciples believed in Him when they witnessed Him performing the first of His signs [see JOHN 2:6-11].

Again, His disciples heard Him confront religious leaders when they attempted to defend the marketing of religion. Listen carefully to how John notes what prompted them to believe. “When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken” [JOHN 2:22].

During the first Passover after the Son of man was introduced to Israel, we read that “many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing” [JOHN 2:23].

The testimony of a woman noted for her promiscuous life testified of His divine prescience, drawing many from her town to see for themselves whether He could be the Messiah. Listen to the impact that the testimony of that soiled woman’s encounter had on her village.

“Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me all that I ever did.’ So, when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world’” [JOHN 4:39-42]. Because she believed, many others believed; and a woman who was denoted as the plaything of multiple men became a powerful voice drawing many to believe the Master. This is the transforming power of the Person of Jesus, the Son of God.

**MATTHEW 28:16, 17**  
**BUT SOME DOUBTED...**

I note that in these instances, people are called to believe in Him. The faith to which the Bible calls us is faith in this One to whom we are introduced as the Son of God. People believe when they see the signs He performs, when they hear what He says or they see what is said about Him in the Scriptures. Indeed, “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” [ROMANS 10:17]. We are constantly driven back to the Word if we will know Him.

**BELIEVING CAN BE DIFFICULT** — To be certain, we are called to believe in the Son of God. However, you must know that believing is difficult; don’t let anyone tell you otherwise. Believing will challenge any of us, especially when we are called to believe during times of great trial. God does not call us to believe so that we can avoid difficulties in our life, God calls us to believe knowing that when we have believed we will face challenges. An Old Testament Prophet gives an excellent demonstration of how difficult it can be to continue believing God’s Word; he is an illustration of how difficult it can be to believe God Himself.

This is the complaint of Jeremiah, the great prophet who was appointed to serve during the last days of the Judean Kingdom.

“You deceived me, LORD, and I was deceived.  
You seized me and prevailed.  
I am a laughingstock all the time;  
everyone ridicules me.  
For whenever I speak, I cry out,  
I proclaim, ‘Violence and destruction!’  
so the word of the LORD has become my  
constant disgrace and derision.  
I say, ‘I won’t mention him  
or speak any longer in his name.’  
But his message becomes a fire burning in my heart,  
shut up in my bones.  
I become tired of holding it in,  
and I cannot prevail.  
For I have heard the gossip of many people,  
‘Terror is on every side!  
Report him; let’s report him!’  
Everyone I trusted watches for my fall.  
‘Perhaps he will be deceived  
so that we might prevail against him  
and take our vengeance on him.’”

[JEREMIAH 20:7-10 CSB]<sup>2</sup>

Now that is quite the prayer of faith! “God, You deceived me! Everybody laughs at me. However, when I try to quit speaking of Him, His Word burns in my heart and I’m helpless against Him. On every side people call me ‘Old “Terror on every side”’ because I’m continually warning of what is coming. God, this believing business is getting hard!”

Already teetering on the brink of despair, the prophet hit rock bottom.

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<sup>2</sup> Passages marked **CSB** are from the **Christian Standard Bible** (Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN 2017)

**MATTHEW 28:16, 17**  
**BUT SOME DOUBTED...**

“May the day I was born  
be cursed.  
May the day my mother bore me  
never be blessed.  
May the man be cursed  
who brought the news to my father, saying,  
‘A male child is born to you,’  
bringing him great joy.  
Let that man be like the cities  
the LORD demolished without compassion.  
Let him hear an outcry in the morning  
and a war cry at noontime  
because he didn’t kill me in the womb  
so that my mother might have been my grave,  
her womb eternally pregnant.  
Why did I come out of the womb  
to see only struggle and sorrow,  
to end my life in shame?”

[JEREMIAH 20:14-18 CSB]

This is a man who has discovered that believing can be demanding—so demanding that no individual can continue in mortal strength. Jeremiah was suffering a total eclipse of the soul. His faith was shredded and he had little ability to continue believing. It wasn’t the only time he struggled, but it was a critical time, nevertheless.

Consider one other time when Jeremiah struggled to continue believing God. The account is in the twelfth chapter of the Book.

“Righteous are you, O LORD,  
when I complain to you;  
yet I would plead my case before you.  
Why does the way of the wicked prosper?  
Why do all who are treacherous thrive?  
You plant them, and they take root;  
they grow and produce fruit;  
you are near in their mouth  
and far from their heart.  
But you, O LORD, know me;  
you see me, and test my heart toward you.  
Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter,  
and set them apart for the day of slaughter.  
How long will the land mourn  
and the grass of every field wither?  
For the evil of those who dwell in it  
the beasts and the birds are swept away,  
because they said, ‘He will not see our latter end.’

[JEREMIAH 12:1-4]

**MATTHEW 28:16, 17**  
**BUT SOME DOUBTED...**

It is as though Jeremiah is saying, “I’m doing what You called me to do, and for what? I’m warning those I love to look to the Living God, and they pay no attention. Why do I bother, LORD? What is the purpose of my ministry? Where is the power You promised? I’m sick of those who play at church; and You, God, You are doing nothing! Why should I keep on declaring this message? It has brought me nothing but trouble.”

But God was doing something. Jeremiah couldn’t see that those to whom he preached were piling up sin on top of sin as they played at religion. To paraphrase the Apostle, they were presuming on the riches of God’s kindness and forbearance and patience. Thus, because of their hard and impenitent heart they were storing up wrath for themselves on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgement is revealed. Listen to God’s response to His disillusioned prophet.

“If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you,  
how will you compete with horses?  
And if in a safe land you are so trusting,  
what will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?  
For even your brothers and the house of your father,  
even they have dealt treacherously with you;  
they are in full cry after you;  
do not believe them,  
though they speak friendly words to you.”

[**JEREMIAH 12:1-6**]

Those now pushing Christians to be silent concerning biblical marriage, to cease speaking of fidelity to family and faith, to quit declaring the clear message of the Living God are runners. If they are wearing us down, what will we do when we are called to compete against horses? When you hear people talk of how difficult the days are now, God is cautioning that you haven’t seen anything yet! What will you do when the hard times start and you see every earthly possession taken because you cannot stop believing the message of Christ? What will you do when you are told that your children must be taught immorality or they will be taken from you? What will you do when you are jailed because you dare speak in the Name of the Lord God?

If you are depending on your feelings, you will soon discover to your dismay how incredibly easy it is to be deceived. People who say they are waiting on a feeling before they believe the Saviour are ripe for demonic deception; feelings are notoriously unreliable. Here is a biblical example of how unreliable feelings can be. Perhaps you will recall that James, the brother of our Master, has written, “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder” [**JAMES 2:19**]! Whenever the demons think of God, the hair stands up on the nape of their neck, for that is what the language signifies. Abject terror is a powerful emotion, but raw emotion saves neither demons or people.

The Revelator foresaw a day when earth dwellers will be filled with dread. Instead of compelling them to believe that Jesus is the Christ, their terror will drive them to seek to die! “The kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand’” [**REVELATION 6:15-17**]?

People who look for a sign before believing may find that they have been deceived. Perhaps you will recall an exchange between the religious leaders of that ancient day and Jesus. “The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, ‘Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation’” [MARK 8:11, 12].

I know that some listening to the message have struggled with doubt. It is not that you question God’s ability or even that you question whether Jesus receives sinners; you struggle to believe that He could receive you. You have heard the testimony of others, perhaps you’ve even had prayers answered, but you struggle with doubt. Well, you’re in good company—some of the disciples counted as part of “the Eleven” doubted when they actually saw Jesus.

**FAITH IS REVEALED THROUGH ACTION** — “The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.” Though some of the disciples apparently struggled to believe that Christ was actually risen from the dead, don’t ignore the fact that all of them did make the trek to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

Before His Passion, Jesus instructed the disciples, “After I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee” [MATTHEW 26:32]. The implication is that He would meet them there. The message of the angel was “Go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him” [MATTHEW 28:7]. Hastening from the tomb, the women encountered the Risen Saviour. His instruction to these women was, “Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me” [MATTHEW 28:10].

Jesus was going to Galilee, and there He would meet the disciples. If they did not act on what they were commanded to do, they would not see the Risen Master. It is an axiom of the Faith that disciples obey what the Lord commands. From earliest days, this has been the foundation of the Faith. Listen to Moses as he instructs Israel. “You shall not worship the LORD your God [as the pagans do]. But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation *there*. *There* you shall go, and *there* you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, your vow offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. And *there* you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households, in all that you undertake, in which the LORD your God has blessed you.

“You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes, for you have not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance that the LORD your God is giving you. But when you go over the Jordan and live in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies around, so that you live in safety, then to the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell *there, there* you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, and all your finest vow offerings that you vow to the LORD. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male servants and your female servants, and the Levite that is within your towns, since he has no portion or inheritance with you. Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place that you see, but at the place that the LORD will choose in one of your tribes, *there* you shall offer your burnt offerings, and *there* you shall do all that I am commanding you” [DEUTERONOMY 12:4-14]. It is important to note that if Israel was not “there,” they would not worship. If the disciples did not go to Galilee, they would not see the Saviour.

**MATTHEW 28:16, 17**  
**BUT SOME DOUBTED...**

Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” [JOHN 14:15]. Shortly after saying this, the Master again said, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word” [JOHN 14:23]. Emphasising this truth, Jesus would again say, “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love” [JOHN 15:10]. Love of the Saviour is evidenced through obedience to His commandments.

John adds emphasis to the words spoken by the Master when he writes, “By this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says, ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked” [1 JOHN 2:3-6].

When the disciples obeyed the command the Risen Lord had given by going to the mountain in Galilee, their obedience served as a vivid demonstration that faith is not passive; faith is active. A saying commonly attributed to the Reformers declares, “We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.” Luther dismissed James as a “right strawy epistle” because he felt there was nothing of the Gospel in the missive. The great Reformer appears to have been especially put off by James’ argument that faith eventuates in action. Luther felt that James was opposed to Paul. In particular, he could not reconcile JAMES 2:17 with ROMANS 3:28. Before we reject either of these biblical statements, let’s read them and see what is said.

Maintaining the context, I note that Paul has written, “The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

“Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law” [ROMANS 3:21-28]. It is the twenty-eighth verse that causes some distress: “We hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.” Of course, this statement supposedly is set in opposition to James’ declaration, “Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

The passage that James wrote, and which gave the Reformer difficulty, reads in context, “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also, faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

“But someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works” [JAMES 2:14-18].

It is reasonable to say that no individual can perform deeds sufficient to make one righteous. However, when we are saved, the Spirit of God takes up residence in our lives and we endeavour to do righteous deeds. This is clearly expressed by the Apostle’s affirmation in the Ephesian Encyclical. “By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” [EPHESIANS 2:8, 9]. These verses are well-known among Evangelical Christians; however, we dare not neglect the verse that follows. “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” [EPHESIANS 2:10].

**MATTHEW 28:16, 17**  
**BUT SOME DOUBTED...**

We do not perform any given action in order to secure faith or to receive the benefits of faith; rather, faith always drives the one possessing that faith to act in such a way that they seek to please God. God presented His Son as the perfect sacrifice because of our sin. We may welcome the One Whom He offered, or we may refuse to welcome Him. What we cannot do is claim to accept Him as our sacrifice and imagine that we can perfect what He has already done. Christ's sacrifice is infinite; if we were able to do some deed to make that sacrifice beneficial, it would mean that it could not be infinite or that our deeds are at least as great as the sacrifice Jesus presented. However, when we have accepted God's sacrifice because of our sin, that is, when we have submitted to His reign over our life, He forgives our sin and the Spirit of Christ takes up residence in our life. We are then born from above, a second birth into God's Family.

Here is where the conflict arises for many individuals. The Spirit of God living within the redeemed person disposes that individual to do the will of God—saved people want to find what pleases God and then do those things. So, good deeds are the result of the transformation that has taken place in the life of a redeemed person. Obedience to the will of God reveals the transforming power of faith in the life of the believer. Some, focused on the deeds that are performed, think that the deeds secure faith and curry favour with the Lord God. However, the good deeds the twice-born child of God performs reveal the transformation we experienced at the time we believed. If we attempted to present them as a means of coercing God's favour, those same good deeds that are pleasing in His sight would be insufficient to influence Him to bless us.

If a physician diagnoses a malady in you and prescribes a medication to remedy the illness, the diagnosis is worthless until you act on the diagnosis and take the medication prescribed. Believing what the physician says is true will not cure the illness; you must act on the diagnosis and take the prescribed medication. Believing is demonstrated through acting on what is believed. The action is not faith; but faith is the energy that drives the action.

**DOUBTING IS NOT DISBELIEVING** — “When they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.” At this point, we enter into territory that can be disturbing for some. Redeemed individuals sometimes harbour doubts—serious doubts. Among the disciples were some who doubted. Though they saw the Risen Saviour, and though they even worshipped Him, some struggled with doubts of what they were seeing and experiencing. It does not mean that they were inferior Christians.

Often, doubts arise after exhausting ourselves in the difficult struggles of the Faith. Perhaps we are physically tired, assailed by those we imagined to be our friends and supporters; at such times, it is almost inevitable that we will question what God is doing, wondering if we perhaps were wrong in our understanding of His appointment. An example of a servant of the Living God who struggled with questions concerning the Son of God is the Baptist. John was a powerful witness to the presence of the Messiah. Yet, when imprisoned by Herod, John expressed doubt concerning whether His cousin could actually be the Messiah.

This is the account of a great man's doubt. “John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?’ And when the men had come to him, they said, ‘John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?”’” In that hour, he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered them, ‘Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me’” [LUKE 7:18-23].



**MATTHEW 28:16, 17**  
**BUT SOME DOUBTED...**

Jesus' answer to John's question is instructive. As you might suspect, Jesus pointed to the signs He was even then performing. However, the more powerful answer to doubt consisted of the message He declared and the impact that message was having in the lives of many people. More important for us as we consider the message today is to note Jesus' assessment of John and His ministry.

“When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written,

“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,  
who will prepare your way before you.”

“I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he” [LUKE 7:24-28].

John was “more than a prophet. John was the messenger promised to herald the coming of Messiah. John was great in the sight of God. Yet, for all this, he struggled with doubt when passing through the deep waters of physical trial. It is almost impossible to imagine that any of us can claim to hold tightly to the Faith when we are assaulted; there is a breaking point for the strongest individual. Here is the truth I would have you see, however. Though John began to doubt, Jesus did not change His assessment of John. Should you come to that day when you wonder whether you have believed a lie, should you question whether it is worth it, should you begin to doubt that God is in control, at such times, God is very much in control and His great right hand will still hold you tightly.

How often I have comforted my weary heart with the words Jesus spoke to His disciples. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one” [JOHN 10:27-30]. Jesus promised, and even though I had nothing more than this promise, it will be enough, for God cannot lie. He has pledged on His sacred honour that He will hold His child securely.

I still recall a day when our children were young and we had been to a morning service at the First Baptist Church of Dallas. Our little family stood at the edge of Ervay Street waiting to cross to the parking garage so we could go home. Our son, Stephen, was about two-years-old and holding my hand. When the light changed, our family stepped out into the street—the girls skipped ahead while Lynda and I walked together, my right hand gripping Stephen's little hand.

At that moment, I noticed a car careen around the corner, moving more rapidly than other vehicles as it headed straight toward us. “Run,” I shouted. The girls and Lynda rushed ahead to the safety of the sidewalk, but Stephen's little legs could only go so fast. Holding tightly, I swung him up and to safety on the sidewalk. What he could not have accomplished on his own because he was still weak, I had provided because my strong right hand held him securely. How very much like the strength of the Living God who holds His child tightly and securely in His hand. The car did not stop for the red light, but rushed past. Nevertheless, our family, including the youngest and weakest, were all safe.

**MATTHEW 28:16, 17**  
**BUT SOME DOUBTED...**

As I considered what had just taken place, and the danger our son had faced, I recalled the words of God through His Prophet,

“Fear not, for I am with you;  
be not dismayed, for I am your God;  
I will strengthen you, I will help you,  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

[ISAIAH 41:10]

The promise of the Living God, though delivered to Israel, assuredly applies to His child in this dispensation.

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name, you are mine.  
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;  
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,  
and the flame shall not consume you.”

[ISAIAH 43:1, 2]

The child of God, the individual who seeks His glory and longs for Him to rescue her from deep waters, can rely on this gracious promise. When the flames are licking at your feet, God has promised that He will not fail—you will be delivered.

After you are delivered, though you questioned what God was doing, you will testify, as did Israel,

“Bless our God, O peoples;  
let the sound of his praise be heard,  
who has kept our soul among the living  
and has not let our feet slip.  
For you, O God, have tested us;  
you have tried us as silver is tried.  
You brought us into the net;  
you laid a crushing burden on our backs;  
you let men ride over our heads;  
we went through fire and through water;  
yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.”

[PSALM 66:8-12]

*Doubting is not disbelief, and doubting does not disqualify.* The child of God is weak, but that child’s Saviour is strong. Peter stepped out of a boat onto boisterous waves at a point when his faith was strong. But he began to look at the waves and he began to doubt. Immediately, he began to sink into the water. Before the waves would overwhelm him, “Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt’ [MATTHEW 14.31]? He doubted because he took his eyes off the Master.

**MATTHEW 28:16, 17**  
**BUT SOME DOUBTED...**

At any given time within the congregation, we will have some who struggle with doubt. Perhaps they are passing through a time of physical trial, and they are exhausted. Perhaps they have suffered through sustained spiritual assault, and they have no spiritual reserves on which they can draw. Perhaps they have experienced some great loss—the death of a loved one, financial reversal, collapse of a dream—and they are still reeling from the blows experienced. Such people need to know that the issue is not whether they can hold on to the Master—the Master has pledged that He will hold onto them; the issue is settled.

Though God holds His child secure in His hand, the people of God must be trained to see matters from God's perspective. We are taught, "Have mercy on those who doubt" [**JUDE 22**]. When we see those among us struggling with questions, wondering about God's acceptance and His love, our response must be that which honours Him—we must show mercy to those who doubt. Doing this, we prepare the ground for that awful day when we, like the Baptist, like Peter or even as some of the disciples who saw the Risen Saviour, doubt. Amen.