



2020 February Sermon Series: Storm Proof

Message #2: Doubts in the Midst of a Storm

Getting the Nod:

Opening Video: A *Shadow of Doubt* (Spoken Truth)

What are the things that qualify a serious storm? It starts with feeling something... A drop in barometric pressure. **It reveals itself with seeing something...** Dark clouds cover. Approaching thunder and lightning. An escalation of high winds. **Then it ominously hits everything...** Heavy rain and tree bending winds. An accumulation of rain that leads to flooding that leads to the weakening of foundations and blocks off roads for travel. **And it ends itself in devastation...** destruction of possessions. Loss of property and money for repairs. Storms changes everything. **It leaves in its path a wreckage that forces us to act. Forces us to face the obstacles and what it takes to return things to normal.**

What are the things that qualify a personal storm? When they enter our lives...It affects our emotions... our feelings... and it affects our fears with things we see, and personal storms hit everything... and leaves a path of wreckage in our lives and shakes our foundations and relationships... and religion. It forces us to look at the obstacles and for answers to get our lives back to normal.

Transitional Statement: And with each personal storm comes obstacles we have to overcome. The obstacles of fear and hopelessness and discouragement. Believers and non-believers all face personal storms. But one of the most ominous and devastating obstacles is doubt... Are you being pummeled by a storm of doubt? **Do you want to storm proof your life against the doubts? If you're not a follower of Christ... start there and receive Him! But if you're a Believer...** are you hitting a wall of doubts in your faith journey? **Then this message is for you.**

Connecting Us:

You see, "Doubts are the obstacles between where we are in our faith journey and where our final destination will be." Or maybe better said, "Doubt is the gap between our current faith and perfect faith."

It is natural to doubt in the storms of life, but always remember that our faith can increase to face the storms!!! But listen...

There are Two Kinds of Spiritual Doubters:

- 1. Deceived Doubters.** (Those walking away from God who believe they're finding freedom. Just like Adam and Eve. Eating the fruit thinking they would be set free from God to master their own lives. Deceived by the serpent.)
- 2. Disturbed Doubters.** (Those struggling in their faith and are deeply disturbed about it. Just like the father and the demon possessed son saying to Jesus "I believe... but God help my unbelief!!!)

But as always... we must remember where we are and what got us here. Storms hit us all!

Transitional Statement: NLT | Jn 16:33 I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.” **Overcoming storms and doubts are just a reality... for us all...**

God's Word on World Changing Love:

Bible Characters Who Doubted:

- **Abraham and Sarah doubted** the news of a child that was coming... they laughed in fact.
- **Gideon doubted** that God was going to make a mighty warrior out of him.
- **Job ultimately doubted** that God cared about his physical pain.
- **Thomas, one of the 12, doubted** that Jesus had conquered death and risen from His tomb.
- **And of course, John the Baptist doubted that Jesus was the Messiah.**

Let's look at Matthew 11...

NKJV | Mt 11:1-11 Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. 2 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.” 7 As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments. Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. 9 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. 10 For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’ 11 “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

The Background on John the Baptist:

- **A colorful character.** Bold and unafraid to face his religious opponents. Pharisees didn't scare him.
- **There was nobody like him.** He wore animal skins and had a steady of locusts and honey.
- **His message was one of hope and repentance**, calling the people of God back to their Lord. But he also rebuked the religious for their hypocrisy. He called them “Brood of snakes” and sinful men who needed to repent especially.
- Those religious guys were powerful and John didn't care about their influence or power.
- **The people loved him... he was treated like a Rock Star!** Josephus in fact wrote more about John the Baptist than Jesus!! John was a phenomenon in his day. He was a powerful preacher and prophet who was prophesied of on the O.T!! “The One who would prepare the way for the Messiah!”
- **His job was to clear the way; prepare the way; and then get out of the way.**
- **On the Jordan River** he would baptize his converts and he ultimately baptized Jesus!!
- **John witnessed the dove and heard the voice of God.** But this event meant that John's ministry was almost over! Mission completed. He even pointed his disciples to Jesus saying, “Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!” Follow Him!!!
- **But during the Ministry of Jesus, John gets thrown into prison. A horrible place. Rats.**

- **How did John get there?** Being the bold, opinionated man, he was, John called out a scandal of King Herod who left his wife for a woman named Herodius. She was originally married to His brother, Phillip, and John called Herod a sinner because of it. **So, jail it was!! WAITING FOR THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS. 18 months in a hell hole.**
- **John heard that Jesus was doing all kind of things like eating and drinking with sinners... misunderstanding the role of Jesus.** He was beginning to doubt. Did he miss something? Was Jesus really the One He thought He was?
- **John was raised to believe Isaiah 61 about the Messiah...** He was to bring good news to the poor... to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. **Was it happening? The poor and brokenhearted and captives??**
- **So, John sends his message of doubt...** “Help me out here, are you the One? Or please let me know if we are to look for someone else!!”
- **This was the response:** 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.” In other words, yes, you can trust me. I am the real deal.

Transitional Statement: If John the Baptist, Spiritual Icon and preacher, relative of Jesus Himself can doubt... so can we.

Our Response to God’s Word:

But how can we prepare for the storms of doubt that will hit us all? There are 7 Things we need to Storm Proofing for Doubt:

7 Things for Storm Proofing for Doubt:

1. **Have mercy on those who doubt.** (We must not put people in a box)
 - NLT | Jude 22 **And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering.**
 - **It is easy to judge** and look down on those struggling in their faith.
 - But those who doubt **don’t need a judge...they need comfort** and edification.
 - **Many times, this isn’t just an overnight bout with doubt** that ends after a good night’s sleep. Some are doubters for a lifetime. It’s just in their nature.
 - **We** need to learn to have mercy on them (and on yourself). You may have to answer the same questions over and over again. That’s all right. And it’s an opportunity for you to learn patience.
 - **All of us can become doubters... and maybe we should lighten up, be humbled.**
2. **Remember that doubt is often the pathway to deeper faith.**
 - Many of us became believers at an early age, with a faith mediated through our parents whom we trusted implicitly. As we become older, our faith is tested through trials, temptations, and suffering.
 - NLT | Jas 1:3 **For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.**
 - Doubt comes more often during our 20s and 30s. **But this is not a bad thing.** We all need to consider that the truths we grew up with must be challenged so we can embrace our faith more deeply. **Such doubt often results in stronger faith.**

3. Learn to live with mystery.

- Sometimes we want all the answers. We want complete understanding before we commit to God. We want the full detailed report without did actions!
- NLT | Dt 29:29 **“The LORD our God has secrets known to no one. We are not accountable for them, but we and our children are accountable forever for all that he has revealed to us, so that we may obey all the terms of these instructions.**
- While God has revealed so much to us, FAITH HAS TO LEARN THAT...there are “secret” things that belong to him alone.”
- We will never be able to fully comprehend the Trinity, or how God created everything out of nothing. **But what we can comprehend is enough for us to rest in God when mystery arises. Faith knows that there are always unanswered questions.**

4. Don't miss the main things by doubting secondary things.

- Look at what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:3... NLT | 1 Co 15:3 **I passed on to you what was most important** and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said.
- Paul told the Corinthians he delivered to them things “of first importance” (1 Cor. 15:3). He goes on to talk about the atoning death and vindicating resurrection of Christ as being most central to the faith.
- **People get bent out of shape about secondary issues** like how many days it took to create the world and when is the exact time of the second coming.
- **Focus on the main things first... are you saved? Does the cross stand out? Does God love me?**

5. Don't ignore the faith you still have.

- Once doubt enters and infects our lives on a conscious level, we may interpret it as outright unbelief. We simply don't know how else to process it. **We think we're on an inevitable road to complete unbelief.**
- It's important for those struggling with doubt... don't let your doubt influence your life to start living like unbelievers.
- **Man says to God, “Show me and I will trust you.” God says, “Trust me and I will show you.”**

6. Doubt your doubts.

- **When we go through times of doubt, we need to make sure we are critical of our doubts as well. Doubt rarely offers solutions!** It just nags at what we have.
- We can be sure that the central truths of our faith will never be outweighed by our doubt. **If we learn to doubt our doubts... we can learn to have faith in our faith.**

7. Be honest about barriers of disobedience.

- It was doubt that caused the fall in the Garden of Eden!! Satan in the serpent asks, **“Did God REALLY say that? You won't die if you eat from that tree!”**
- It's been the tool of Satan since the beginning of time. Doubts lead to sin... and sin leads to physical and spiritual death.
- **Ask yourself the question, “Is there sin in my life that I have hidden?” “Am I willfully ignoring God and what you know He wants for me?”**

Transition: John the Baptist was a strong person of faith. He was the forerunner for Jesus, yet he had a season in life when he doubted. Doubt is certainly a part of many Christians journey; however, how the Christian responds to doubt makes the difference.

These three keys will help overcome the season of doubt: Be honest about your doubts. Look around to see the Lord at work. Refer to Scripture.

Drawing the Net:

Illustration of an Elementary School Student Who Doubted a President's Identity:

On March 11, 1991, eight-year-old Anthony Henderson upset the distinguished leader of our nation, President George Bush. President Bush was visiting Anthony's school and had sat down beside Anthony to read him a book. Suddenly in the midst of the reading Anthony Henderson queried, "Are you really the President?" Mr. Bush was quite surprised by the question and even moreso as he saw the serious look on the lad's face. President Bush responded, "Yeah, you mean you didn't know that?" "Did you think I was a pretend guy or something?" Mr. Bush then muttered, "how can I prove it to you?" Our president of the United States then proceeded to pull out identification from his wallet. "Let's see now, here is my driver's license; see it says B-U-S-H, Bush." "My name is George Herbert Walker Bush". Anthony didn't seem convinced. President Bush then pulled out a series of identification items he thought would persuade the child of the truth. "Here is my American Express Card; here is a picture of my grandchild and here is one of my grandsons playing baseball". Finally Mr. Bush said, "I guess that is all I have to show you unless you will accept that black limousine out there; or maybe I'll give you an autograph". "Oh no", replied Anthony. "The teacher said we can't take autographs". There is a picture in the March issue of USA Today of Anthony Henderson sitting with a puzzled President examining his American Express Card. Don't leave home without it. But even that didn't help George Herbert Walker Bush with Anthony Henderson.

Listen church, it is getting harder and harder to get sinners to come to your church. Do you know why? Its because the world is looking for proof that we are what we say we are. Just because you sit in the church house every Sunday will not convince the world you're a bonafide Christian any more than a driver's license convinced Anthony Henderson of our President's identity. What is it going to take? Jesus gave us that answer in John 13:35, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another". From a sermon by Tim Adams, Friends for Christ's Sake, 12/1/2009

The Pastoral Prayer of Challenge

(Make the congregation aware of the altar time being both now and after the service)

Truths to pray about:

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Join with the Praise Team and Let's close off with this song...