

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, August 30, 2017 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

NO PAIN, NO GAIN
“How God Grows Us”

The Pain of Dealing with 3D Pain – Part 3
“Gaining Ground Without a Doubt”
James 1:2-4 & 5-8, Genesis 2:15-17 & 3:1-1, Luke 1:5-25 & 1:57-66

“Consider it pure joy, my brother (and sisters) whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” –James 1:2-4 (NIV)

Again, we have been in our study, “No Pain, No Gain,” for several weeks and we’ve covered a lot of ground. Although it may sound absurd or perhaps at least a little sarcastic at best, that the pains and difficult trial of this life should ever be counted a “joy,” or an opportunity for “gain,” what we have discovered in our study that a maturing faith... a growing faith, finding gains in our faith includes often comes on through times of pain and heartache... trials ... sometimes even great pain and trial. Without the pains of this life we may never really develop... and nobody, it seems, ever escapes the process. We simply cannot become the people God intends us to be without some of life’s pains, heartaches, difficulties along the way... some bumps along the road. Just for review we have discovered that when the pains of this life come, when trial and difficulties come we can do a couple of things with it, and we have rephrased this several different ways... so let’s put it like this in this week’s study. There are two possible responses to the trials and pain in this life

2 Possible Responses to Trials:

- 1. The trials and pain we experience in this life can anger us** - In other words, we can allow our trials and struggles... the pain of this life to defeat and embitter us, and push us away from God... make us angry at Him and at life. Often when “trial of many kinds” (as James calls it) come our way, whatever that trial may be (failure, loss, discouragement, heartache, disappointment), it may catch us so off guard, so unprepared, that it knocks the wind out of our sails. It may leave us reeling, perhaps hurting so deeply or so confused and bewildered that we find ourselves growing angry... sometimes even mad. We get mad at God, mad at the world and mad at others. We can lash out and allow our pains and disappointments in life to literally defeat and stifle the life out of us and defeat us. We may grow anger, bitter, and out of touch with God.
- 2. The trial and pains we experience in this life can advance us** - That’s what James says. He is telling us that for a believer, the trials and pains we experience in this life can actually

serve to mature us and advance us in our faith. We can find “gain” spiritually in our Christian life and growth. They can actually grow us in the faith so that our faith is complete and not lacking anything. The pains of this life may actually cause us to draw closer to God than we have ever been in greater dependence and reliance on Him.

So the question is how do I advance and gain in my faith rather than become angry and bitter when the trial of life overwhelm me? How do I develop and mature in my faith rather than wilt and die in despair and bitterness when I’m hurting? How do I turn moments of struggle, and hardship, and difficulty into opportunities to develop my faith and gain ground in my walk? James mentions “*trials of many kinds*” and we have explored a couple of these different types of pain in life that can be trials that God may use to gain ground in our faith.

Where We Have Been: (5 pains though which we may find gain)

1. **The pain of WAITING** – What do we learn from the pain of waiting? We learned to wait, rest and trust in God.
2. **The pain of SUFFERING** – What do we learn from the trial of suffering? We learned that suffering in this life is not an optional course, but a required course we will all face at some time in some way, and that times of suffering may deep our faith and dependence on God.
3. **The pain of LOSS** - What do we learn from the pain of loss? We learned that loss is one of the hardest pains to navigate and come through. We learned that we are not alone in our loss... that loss is not a sign of sin and that everyone experiences it. God is faithful in our times of loss, to see us through, to strengthen us and provide for our needs in the midst of it, and encourage our hearts with His presence and provision.
4. **The pain of WORRY** – We learned that we are all “worriers”... 100% worry! We also learned that many of our great heroes of the faith were worriers, that worry may be a spiritual symptom of trust, control and lack of faith. We also learned that God is faithful even in our worrying times, faithful to see us through, to strengthen us and provide for our needs in the midst of it, and encourage our hearts.
5. **The pain of FEAR** – We discovered that “fear” can literally paralyze our faith and impede our growth as believers. It can keep us from moving forward and accomplishing even the simplest of tasks. We also discovered from the Apostle Paul in **2 Timothy 1:7** that “⁷...*God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*” I am also reminded of the Psalmist words in **Psalm 56:3**, “³*What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.*” We learned that our fear may be opportunities for growth and gain, as they the push us to lean further into our God and trust in His divine provision and protection in our times of fear.
6. **The pain of DISAPPOINTMENT AND DISCOURAGEMENT** – These were the first of our 3D of pain... disappointment and discouragement, and it is certainly true that times of discouragement and disappointment in this life may be crippling to our walk and our faith. But these times may also be times of a greater leaning and dependence on God to see us through. We may find our prayer life deepening and our pouring into God’s Word gain a greater fervency.

The Christian life is an overcoming life. Even though we will definitely have problems and personal struggles in this life (trials of many kinds and pain in this life), we will be able to overcome because of Jesus. Because of Him, we have victory over the world, including sinful habits, bitterness, loneliness, guilt, fear, and discouragement. God desires for you to live an

overcoming life! Jesus, Himself, said in John 16:33, *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* And in 1 John 5:4-5, *"For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."* Christians are overcomers and truly are to live victorious Christian lives every day, but let's be honest, there are many painful trial and struggles, heartaches and difficulties along that way that can daily steal our joy and paralyze our faith, destroy our relationship and weaken our walk... the painful times and trials can embitter and defeat us if we let them.

Now, the last couple of weeks we have been looking at the 3D's of pain, and we have been talking about the first two of these 3, discouragement and disappointment, and their paralyzing effects on our lives as believers. This week we want to turn our attention to another of these 3D pains that we may encounter in life that can be equally as destructive to the life of a believer, and that is the painful trial of "doubt." The great preacher, **Charles Haddon Spurgeon** said about doubt, *"Doubt discovers difficulties which it never solves; it creates hesitancy, despondency, despair. Its progress is the decay of comfort, the death of peace. 'Believe!' is the word which speaks life into a man, but doubt nails down his coffin."*

And I might add that doubt defeats and disillusiones the lives of many professing believers and keep them from enjoying the full benefits of their faith and the victorious Christian life that Christ died to give them. But not only that, our ultimate enemy, the devil will use our doubt to cast doubt in the minds of many who would perhaps come to Christ, but all they see in our doubts instead. As **Dr. John MacArthur** says, *"Every temptation, directly or indirectly, is the temptation to doubt and distrust God."* Doubt may be one of the devil's most powerful tools.

THE DEVIL'S TOOL SALE

"There's an old fable that says the Devil once held a sale and offered all the tools of his trade to anyone who would pay their price. They were spread out on the table and each one labeled... hatred, malice, envy, despair, bitterness, lust, fear, and anger - all the weapons that everyone knows so well. But off to one side lay a harmless looking old and wooden shaped instrument marked 'doubt.' It was old and worn looking but it was priced far above all the rest of the tools. This puzzled one of the buyers there, so he asked the reason why the unreasonable price, for such a worn-out, old tool. To that the Devil replied, 'Ah-ha, that is the most prized tool in my chest. It is worn because it is often and so successfully used. I can use this one so much more easily than the others. No one knows that it belongs to me, so with it I can open doors that are tightly bolted against the others. Once I get inside a heart with this tool I can use any tool that suits me best.' That is doubt!

Dr. Charles Stanley gives a couple of reasons that he sees that even Christians/believers may struggle with doubt sometimes.

3 Reasons Believers May Struggle with Doubt According to Dr. Charles Stanley:

1. A failure to see **God work** in our **circumstances** may cause us to doubt – Dr. Stanley says, "One reason we are so prone to doubt is that we fail to see God at work in our circumstances. We asked, and nothing happened. But the Lord is not some cosmic bellhop who jumps in response to our requests. He sees past, present, and future and knows the right

time for every answer. His invisible hand is already at work on our behalf—arranging situations to accomplish His will, opening hearts, and preparing us to receive what He wants to give.” When we pray and anguish over circumstances, be they trials or heartaches or struggles, and we don’t seem to see God doing anything to immediately help us, it may lead us to doubt... doubt Him, doubt His care, doubt His presence, doubt His ability to help... doubt!

2. **A lack of understanding in God’s ways may cause us to doubt – Dr. Stanley says, “Another cause for uncertainty (and doubt in our life) is ignorance. If we don’t know God’s ways, we will be disappointed in His response. All too often our prayers are accompanied by (our) expectations of how He will work. When He fails to intervene according to our timetable or anticipated method, we start to doubt.”** But placing our faith in the Lord and trusting in His good and perfect ways gives us stability as we wait for His answer.
3. **A neglect of time spent in God’s Word may cause us to doubt –** Much comfort and help can be found in God’s Word when we face circumstances in our life that could lend themselves to doubt. When we spend time in God’s Word we gain a greater understanding of how God works, of His ways, and of principles that may help us to navigate trying times. Dr. Stanley says, “To overcome doubts, spend time in the Word to learn God’s principles and ways. Then you’ll begin to grasp what He wants to achieve in your life and how He goes about it. Examine your past from a biblical perspective—faith will grow as you see the unexpected ways He answered your prayers.”

Let’s probe a little deeper to understand the “doubt” we may experience. How do we deal with the pain of doubt... and “doubt” is and can be very painful to deal with? When life gets hard, and doubt assails us, what are we to do? Let’s take a look at this particular trial that we may all face from time to time, and see how we can grow and mature in the faith even in the face of the painful trial of doubt.

I. DOUBT EXPOSED

Doubt is an experience common to all people. Even those with faith in God struggle with doubt on occasion and say with the man in **Mark 9:24, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”** Some people are hindered greatly by doubt; some see it as a springboard to life; and others see it as an obstacle to be overcome. The Bible has something to say about the cause of doubt and provides examples of people who struggled with it, but before we get into that let’s expose the world’s way of looking at doubt a bit.

2 Worldly Interpretations of Doubt:

1. **Classical Humanist Thought** – Classical humanism says that doubt, while uncomfortable, is absolutely essential for life. Famous Philosopher, **René Descartes** said, **“If you would be a real seeker after truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life you doubt, as far as possible, all things.”** What is he saying? Is he right? What may be wrong with that thinking?

Observation: Contrary to the humanistic view that doubt is essential to life, the Bible says that doubt is a destroyer of life... it can certainly be a destroyer of our faith. Remember that God is not threatened by our doubts and questions about Him. It doesn’t shake Him up for us to have doubts, but it can sure shake us up and leave us unsettled, unstable in all our ways.

2. **Pagan Religious Thought** - This is similar to what the founder of **Buddhism** who said, **“Doubt everything. Find your own light.”** What is that quote saying? Is it right? What may be wrong with that thinking?

Observation: Doubt everything... seems that this would make us very cynical and skeptical in life, and very pessimistic. Again, to doubt everything is to have faith in nothing... because faith is “being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see...” according to Hebrews 11:1 – “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

PERSPECTIVE: If we take their advice, we would have to doubt what they said, which seems rather contradictory. Instead of taking the advice of skeptics and false teachers, we will see what the Bible has to say.

II. DOUBT DEFINED

So what, exactly, is doubt? How do we define it? Let’s get a better understanding of what we are talking about by exploring some definitions of doubt.

3 Definitions of Doubt:

1. **Webster’s Dictionary** – **“An uncertainty of belief or opinion that often interferes with decision-making.”**
2. **Quote Definition** - **“Doubt and unbelief are two sides to the same coin. It means to waver in opinion or judgment; to question; to deem uncertain; to distrust. It is a lack of belief or faith in God and His provision.” - Harriet Bond**
3. **Word Study Definition** – **“Dubious, to give rise to uncertainty, to be unsettled or unsure.”** We get our English word doubt (which originally was “daut”) from the Latin “dubitare or dubius... from which we get our other English word “dubious.” The English word “dubious” may give us a good understanding of the word “doubt.” The word “dubious” means “to give rise to uncertainty, to be unsettled or unsure.”

III. DOUBT EXPLAINED (Various Scripture)

The very first expression of doubt in the Bible is in Genesis 3, when Satan tempted Eve. Let’s look at it and see what it teaches us about the enemy of doubt (Genesis 2:15-17 & 3:1-13). God had given a clear command regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and had specified the consequence of disobedience. Satan introduced doubt into Eve’s mind when he asked, **“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”** He wanted her to lack confidence in God’s command. When she affirmed God’s command, including the consequences, Satan replied with a denial, which is a stronger statement of doubt, “You will not surely die.” Doubt is a tool of Satan to make us lack confidence in God’s Word and consider His judgment unlikely.

GENESIS 2:15-17 & GENESIS 3:1-13

3 Things Doubt Does According to the Garden Account:

1. **Doubt gives rise to the enemies ability to mislead and deceive us** – **Genesis 3:1** says, **“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD**

God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?''" Do you see it? Satan placed a questioning doubt in the woman's mind and was thereby able to craftily mislead and deceive her.

2. **Doubt causes us to question God and His goodness** – Again Genesis 3:1 says, "¹Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?''" Here the Enemy raises a doubt about God and His intentions to keep Adam and Eve from something God, and it works. Notice what Eve says in verses 2-3, ²And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³ but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" I don't know if you noticed it but she buys into doubt about God's goodness. She says He will kill us if we eat from that tree. In verses 4-5 the Devil goes on to say, questioning God's goodness, ⁴Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
3. **Doubt causes us to miss out on God blessing and promises** – Not only was the relationship between God and Adam and Eve (man) broken (see vs. 8), but they were banished from the place of God's blessing and provision... the garden. Verse 23 says, "²³Therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken."

Observation: *Lest anyone doubt, doubt has devastating effects on the life of a child of God. It opens the door for a whole host of missed blessings and opportunities, and cripples our relationship with God.*

Lest we think that we can lay all of the blame on Satan, the Bible clearly holds us accountable for our own doubts.

LUKE 1:5-25 & LUKE 1:57-66

Take your Bible and go to the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, and I want you to notice with me the story of the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5ff). When Zechariah was visited by the angel of the Lord and told that he would have a son (Luke 1:11-17), he doubted the word given to him. He logically assumed that he and his wife were too old to have children, and in response to his doubt, the angel said he would be mute until the day God's promise was fulfilled (Luke 1:18-20). Zechariah doubted God's ability to overcome natural obstacles – many people today share the same doubt. Any time we allow human reason to overshadow faith in God, sinful doubt is the result.

3 Things Doubt Does According to the John the Baptist Account:

1. **Doubt blinds our eyes us to the possibilities of what God can do** – Did you notice in the story that although God revealed what he was going to do through Zechariah and Elizabeth, Zechariah couldn't see it? Verse 7 tells us that Elizabeth was barren and well advanced in years... way past her child bearing years. Notice verses 11-18, "¹¹Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar

of incense. ¹² And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. ¹³ But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴ And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. ¹⁵ For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. ¹⁶ And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’^[b] and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”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.” In other words, “God, I can’t see this happening! It’s just too impossible!” Remember nothing is impossible with God.

1. **Doubt closes our ears to the voice of God in our life** – Essentially, Zechariah’s doubt said, “I can’t even hear this! This voice can’t be real!”
2. **Doubt silences our mouths as a witness for God to our world** – Literally, Zechariah’s mouth was silenced for the entire pregnancy of this child. For 9 months, he didn’t get to bear witness for God, which remember was his job!

JAMES 1:5-8

Contrary to the humanistic view that doubt is essential to life, the Bible says that doubt is a destroyer of life. I want you to turn with me to **James 1:5-8**. James tells us that when we ask God for wisdom, we are to ask in faith, without doubt. If we doubt God’s ability to respond to our request, what would be the point of asking in the first place? God says that if we doubt while we ask, we will not receive anything from Him, because we are unstable. “...he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.” (James 1:6).

⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ 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; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”
–James 1:5-8 (NKJV)

3 Things Doubt Does According to James, the Half-Brother of Jesus:

1. **Doubt cuts off the flow of God’s generous and gracious blessing to our lives** – Verse 5 reminds us that God give generously to all who ask, even without finding fault. That speaks of grace. But according to verses 6-7, doubt interferes with that generous and gracious flow. “⁶ 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;
2. **Doubt causes us not to be able to see things clearly** – Think about what James is saying in verse 6 when he says, “⁶ 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.” Think about what happens when someone is blown around, jostled, tossed about, spun around and

around in a boat in the middle of the sea. He or she become disoriented, confused, and unable to see where they are going. That is the certain effects of doubt on the life of a believer. It causes us to lose our bearings.

3. **Doubt creates an uncertainty and unsteadiness in our daily walk and life** – Verse 8 says of this doubt filled one, “...*he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*”

IV. DOUBT DEFEATED

So the question is how do we overcome the trial of “doubt” in our lives in order that we may grow and mature through our doubts and not be defeated and weakened by doubt? Let me give you, in conclusion some sure-fired remedies for doubt.

Remedy for Doubt:

1. **The Word of God (Romans 10:17)** – Remember that faith is the remedy for doubt. Well where does faith come from? Here it is in **Romans 10:17** “*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” God gave us the Bible as a testimony of His works in the past, so we will have a reason to trust Him in the present. Psalm 77:11 says, “I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago” In order for us to have faith in God, we must study to know what He has said. Once we have an understanding of what God has done in the past, what He has promised us for the present, and what we can expect from Him in the future, we are able to act in faith instead of doubt.
2. **The Body of Christ (Hebrews 10:19-25)** – Listen to **Hebrews 10:19-25**, “*19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*” We have to deal with any doubt and unbelief; and we do this by surround ourselves with people of like faith. We have to shut off the road to unbelief, by taking care what you hear and watch.
3. **Through Much Prayer and Fasting (Mark 9:17-29)** – There is a story told in Mark 9:17-29 that helps us to understand the place of prayer and fasting in the life of a child of God, especially when doubt prohibits from being all that God has called us to be. Listen to it, “*17 Then one of the crowd answered and said, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. 18 And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.” 19 He answered him and said, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.” 20 Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. 21 So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. 22 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!”*²⁵ *When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it: “Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!”*²⁶ *Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, “He is dead.”*²⁷ *But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.*²⁸ *And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?”*²⁹ *So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”* We can have enough faith, but it’s the unbelief that will negate your faith. Jesus rebuked His disciples when they could not cast out the dumb spirit out of the boy, and said that it was because of their unbelief, and He tells them that “prayer and fasting drives out unbelief”. We must be a people of much prayer and the lost art of fasting to deal successfully with the doubts that are sure to flood our life.