

## Doubting Castle

A gospel minister once visited a lady who was living in what John Bunyan called, "Doubting Castle." She suffered from persistent doubts and fears and was filled with all manner of misgivings about the future Judgement. (By the way, none of us are always entirely free from such bombardments of unbelief. Even the most mature believers are not always immune to them).

To try and answer her concerns, the preacher quoted 1 John 4:18, "*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love.*" He then asked her,

"Do you know what that means?"

She paused for a moment, and then replied,

"I suppose it means that when I love God perfectly, I shall get rid of my doubts and fears "

"Yes, certainly you will," he replied "but that will not be until you arrive in glory. This verse," he continued, "is about Jesus, not about what you are supposed to do. It is about what He has done!"

The dear lady's face took on a look of entire astonishment. The minister then continued, "Just look at the verse through gospel eyes. Think of God's love instead of your own. Our verse says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear." It is His love, Christ's love, that is perfect, not yours. Your love will never be perfect until you are face to face with the Master in glory."

He then continued, "But think of the perfect love expressed when Christ came to die for us and consider that His love is still flowing from glory. Believe this and enjoy life. Believe and apply the gospel and your fear of the future Judgment will be banished."

It was quite a new thought for her, and she learned to look at this verse from the finished work, gospel viewpoint.

To enjoy being saved we need to learn the forgetfulness of self. We need to know we are not the center of the gospel. In fact, the gospel is not about us, it's about the Lord Jesus Christ, His perfections and accomplishments. We of course are the beneficiaries of the gospel, but the gospel is not about our doing and dying and rising again, it's about His. We will never enjoy assurance if we continually look inward. We might as well look for warmth in the Arctic Circle as investigate our hearts to find the perfect love of God.

But think of God's great love to you in the gospel. Believe it; take Him at His word about the finished work and you will have peace with Him (Romans 5:1). and you will enjoy the Holy Ghost shed abroad in your heart (Romans 5:5). For the believer, Judgment is not a future event; it is past (see Isaiah 53:4-6; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

### **We are safe!**

We have no acceptable righteousness of our own, but we have been given the very righteousness of Christ. He has been judged instead of us. If you believe this, you will enjoy being saved and will spend much less time in 'Doubting Castle'.

The more we grow in our appreciation and love for the gospel the less we know anything of the continual fear of the Judgment Day. The more Christ's perfect love for us is grasped, the more fear is thrust and hurled away.

### **We are safe!**

John Bunyon, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, recounts the time when agonizing doubts about his salvation were finally overcome: He writes,

“One day as I was passing into the field, this sentence fell upon my soul. Your righteousness is in heaven. I saw with the eyes of my soul Jesus Christ at God's right hand; there, I say, was my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, God could not say of me, ‘He lacks my righteousness,’ for that was in front of Him. I also saw that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse, for my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, ‘the same yesterday, today, and forever.’ My chains did fall off my legs indeed. I was loosed from my afflictions and irons (doubts about his standing with God) ... I went home rejoicing for the grace and love of God.” (*Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, 35-36).

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