

(Luke) 03 - Unbelief-Faith

by Ed Miller

The Gospel of Luke emphasizes God's love for all mankind and provides certainty and assurance in the things of God through historical facts, simplicity of faith, and focusing on the object of faith, the Son of Man.

Duration: 46:35

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 1:1-4, Luke 15:11-32, John 3:16, Romans 8:24-25, Ephesians 2:8-9

Topics: "Faith And Doubt", "Gospel Of Luke"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the introduction of the book of Luke and highlights the refined and eloquent grief expressed in the first four verses. The speaker emphasizes Luke's scholarly approach and his intention to compile an accurate account of the events witnessed by the early followers of Jesus. The Gospel of Luke is characterized by six recurring emphases, which include Jesus being the teacher and friend of all mankind, the Savior of all mankind, and the hope of all mankind. The speaker also mentions the importance of facts in Luke's Gospel and how it provides certainty for faith.

Transcript

There's a little outline going around, I hope you all have that. Also we have a schedule here, if some of you didn't get that, you want to pick up, it goes all the way through November, what days we'll meet. There's only two weeks that we'll not meet through the end of November, but you can get that.

And then also one other thing, every now and then I have to go to a Bible conference, and I always urge you to pray for us as we go. We have one coming up at the end of October. Last year I mentioned that, and several people indicated that they might be interested in attending a Bible conference like that.

If you are interested, there's one at the end of October, it's at Sandy Cove Bible Conference, and Lillian has applications and all the information. So if you're interested in something like that, just see her, she always gets things done right. All right, the book of Luke is the presentation of our Lord Jesus as the Son of all mankind.

That expression, Son of Man, is used eighty times in the gospel. Not once out of those eighty times does it come out of the mouth of another person. It's always the Lord Jesus who calls Himself the Son of Man.

No one else ever called Him Son of Man. Now there's one little exception. One time out of the eighty, there's one, one time somebody said, He said, He's the Son of Man.

And so they quoted it, but they were still quoting from the Lord Jesus. I like to call that title, Son of Man, Jesus' favorite title for Himself. Only Jesus used that, and it has the idea of Son of all mankind.

In other words, Luke presents the Lord Jesus as the Son of all mankind, the Savior of everybody. That's the point of Luke. He was a Gentile, not a Jew, and He wrote to the whole wide world.

Nobody was excluded. When you read the gospel of Luke, you're going to see how Jesus reached out to everybody. You might want to glance at this one verse, it's in Luke chapter 4, verse 18.

And when God was describing the mission of Messiah, He quoted Isaiah. In chapter 4, verse 18, it says, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He sent me to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden.

Well why did Luke quote that verse from Isaiah? And the answer is, because the Messiah was coming for the poor, for the captives, for the blind, for the downtrodden. And he quoted that because Jesus fulfilled that. And Luke emphasizes all of those kinds of things.

You'll be encouraged when you go through the gospel of Luke to realize that God is for you. God is for me. God is for everybody.

And Luke has that great emphasis. Now for the past two weeks, we've been introducing this wonderful gospel and trying to get you into the heart of it, into the spirit of this tremendous book. I'm not going to review that.

As I said, if you missed that, Lillian would be glad to give you the tape. We mentioned six recurring emphases in the gospel of Luke that are unique and that focus on His attention. Now before we get into the message, I'm going to ask you to glance at the handout sheet that I gave you.

From time to time, I'm going to give these handout sheets. Did everyone get one? Okay, I don't know where they are. They're up at this end.

I hope we have enough. There's some more there? All right. Let me just make a comment about handout sheets.

My purpose for handout sheets may be a little different, perhaps, than a lot of teachers. I handout sheets from time to time because I think the information on those sheets is helpful. That's number one.

And number two, because I don't want to waste precious class time going over these particular facts. I think some of these facts can be awfully dry and awfully academic. I think it's important to get them, but we're here and we only have a short time and we want to see our precious Savior.

And we want to relate the great truths of God to our own lives by precious principles. And so that's where I'll put my focus, but I'll keep handing these sheets out and you can glance at them from time to time. Anyway, you see on that sheet the message of the book of Luke.

It's presenting the Lord Jesus as the Son of all mankind. And the way it's divided presents Him as the Teacher, the Friend of all mankind, the Teacher of all mankind, the Savior of all mankind, and finally, the Hope of all mankind. And so we'll follow that particular outline and refer to it from time to time.

I'll ask you to turn to chapter one, please. This marvelous introduction, just on a technical note. The first four verses of the book of Luke, and everyone who studies the book agrees with it, we have the most refined Greek in these first four verses.

The most eloquent Greek that you'll find anywhere in the whole New Testament in these first four verses. And of course, it illustrates what kind of a scholar Luke was. I'm going to read those four verses in as much as many have undertaken to compile and account of the things accomplished among us.

Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word have handed them down to us, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus, so that you might know the exact truth about the things that you have been taught. Let me make a couple of comments about this wonderful introduction. First of all, in verse three, who is this most excellent Theophilus? Well let me tell you right up front, nobody knows.

Nobody knows who he was. Some think because it says most excellent, that Greek word there is very powerful and it's used to describe some rich nobleman. Most excellent Theophilus.

You know in 1 Corinthians 1.26, it says not many noble are called. But it doesn't say not any noble are called. So there are some wise and some noble in the earth.

And evidently Theophilus was one of those. Some have suggested that Theophilus was a slave owner, and Luke was the slave. And that he actually set Luke free.

And then now the slave who is now redeemed is writing to his former master. There's no proof of that, but many hold that particular position. We know he's probably a Gentile because it's a Greek name, Theophilus.

Some say because of verse four, I've written that you might know the exact truth. Some think maybe he was a seeker and he didn't even know the Lord. And Luke was written because he was seeking for the truth.

Some think he was an unbelieving believer. That he was a believer, but he was weak, he was new. And so Luke is writing to give him assurance.

Some early church fathers say Theophilus is nobody. That he didn't exist. That he's not a real person.

You see, the word Theophilus has a meaning, it's a Greek word. And it means lover of God. One who loves God.

And so they say, well maybe Luke is doing what John Bunyan did in Pilgrim's Progress. Remember how he used words? And he wrote about evangelists, and obstinate, and pliable, and Mr. Worldly Wisdom, and Mr. Legality, and patience, and talkative, and faith, and all of that. And they were people with those names.

And so some say maybe he's just writing this to all Theophiluses, Theophili, I don't know all the plural. To every lover of God. And this is a book just addressed to them.

I personally think because of the way Luke uses facts, that he probably was a real individual and he really existed. We don't have the details. But since nobody knows who he is, let's use it that way.

Don't answer, just think. Are you a lover of the Lord? Then Luke's for you. He's written this to lovers of the Lord.

And some say it's the other way around, those beloved of God. Either way, the book is for those who love the Lord and are loved by the Lord. Notice in verse 3, please, Luke claims that he has investigated everything, carefully, from the beginning, in order to write everything out in consecutive order.

Now Luke claims he was not an eyewitness of the Lord Jesus. In other words, he never heard Jesus speak. He never saw Jesus work a miracle.

He never heard Him give a parable. He was not present when the Lord Jesus died on the cross, and when He rose again from the dead. But as a scholar, he gathered up the materials, he was a reporter.

And he gathered up the materials and investigated everything from the beginning. And he talked to the eyewitnesses. And he sat them down and he interviewed them.

There were many spurious accounts that were handed down. There were eyewitnesses. There were oral traditions.

And he gathered all the information together in a scientific way. He sifted it. He examined it.

He studied it. He analyzed it. He categorized it.

And he wrote it down for Theophilus. Now, when you read the first two chapters, one of the things you'll realize, you say, he sat eyewitnesses down. Who did he get for an eyewitness? I think if you read chapters 1 and 2 carefully, you'll find out that he took the mother of our Lord Jesus.

There are things in chapters 1 and 2 nobody knew but Mary. And I can just picture Luke sitting around the table with Mary and say, all right now, you're an eyewitness. Tell me about these things.

Who else would know that she treasured these things in her heart? She's the only one that would know that. Of course, the Holy Spirit could have told him directly. I don't doubt that.

But I have an idea. He just took Mary and sat her down with the family and interviewed her and found out about all this. She treasured these things in her heart for Luke.

She treasured these things in her heart for Luke to write to all the lovers of God so that we could have the things that she treasured. I'm glad for these four verses because it delivers me from the wrong view of the inspiration of Scripture. Some people have the idea the way God inspired Scripture, these people just went into a trance, you know.

And then God dictated from heaven. No, that's not how it was. God used these people.

He used their personalities. He used their temperaments. And just because Luke was scientific and gathered material and arranged data and all of that, that doesn't mean that God didn't inspire him.

That's how God inspired these particular men. God guided him in his research and so on. Glance at verse 4, please, and you'll see why he wrote.

According to this verse, Luke is writing, so this lover of God, Theophilus, might know the exact truth. In other words, to be certain, to be sure. The King James says that thou mightest know the certainty of all of

these things.

Luke wants the lovers of God to be fully persuaded of the truth. You're going to see this, and we'll emphasize it all through the Gospel, how he stresses certainty. He writes to establish the lovers of truth, to ground them in these great truths.

By the way, in passing, if there's uncertainty in your heart about any of these things, or if you know somebody or you're dealing with somebody who struggles and they're uncertain about these things, take them to Luke. If you know someone who has any doubts, say, read Luke. Read Luke.

And I know we always push the Gospel of John. Read the Gospel of John. If somebody doesn't know the Lord, then give them the Gospel of John.

But if somebody knows the Lord and they're just struggling with doubts, give them Luke, because it was written that they might have certainty in these things. When you see the Son of All Mankind embracing sinners, you get tremendous assurance. Now, I'm not going to develop it all that much, but let me just call attention, and we'll pick it up as we go.

There are three ways in the Gospel of Luke that he emphasizes certainty. Let me just mention those for you. Number one, Luke.

More than Matthew, Mark, or John, Luke lays tremendous stress on historical facts. He gives you the facts. He's a historian.

He does it here in Luke. He did it again in the book of Acts when he wrote Acts. He points to contemporary dates and political figures.

Just glance at the first three verses of Luke chapter 3, and you'll see what I'm talking about. And he does this all the way through the Gospel. In Luke chapter 3, in the 15th year of Tiberius' season, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod the Tetrarch of Galilee, Tetrarch is just the ruler of a fourth part of the territory, Philip, Tetrarch of Arcturia and Trachea and so on, Laconius, Tetrarch of Abilene.

He names these facts for this reason. You can check them out. If you give the facts, you can investigate that.

They can be checked. This is not like some cultist who claims, I was in a secret place in a cave and had a special vision, and ten things were given to me and then the angel left. Now take my word for it.

That's not how Luke writes. Luke doesn't say just take my word for it. He names names and names dates and names places and tells you about the witnesses and who you can check with.

And that's a tremendous thing. Imagine if a person was found guilty or was accused of being guilty, and he went to court and he had 500 eyewitnesses with him. Now the judge would love that.

And the jury would love that. And the case would be quickly disposed of. That's the kind of thing you have in Luke.

You know, the Lord Jesus appeared to 500 people at one time after he rose from the dead. It's based on fact. And God said, I want your faith certain.

But certainty comes through fact. And we'll show that all the way through. It's like the old Dragnet series.

Sergeant Joe Friday, remember that? Just the facts, ma'am. Just the facts. Well, that's Luke.

He just gives you the facts. He not only stresses the facts, but he lays great stress on the simplicity of faith. And we'll see that as we go along.

I like to connect this with Colossians 4.14. Colossians 4.14 says that Luke was the blessed physician. He was a medical doctor, you know. And physicians, just by the nature of their calling, have to be technical.

And sometimes they throw around these 50 cent words, you know, and you don't really know what they're saying. The doctor has to be alert to the natural and scientific explanation for what's going on. But when you read Luke, he just calls you to simple childlike faith.

Even though he was a smart doctor. Even though he was so intelligent and used the best Greek that's used throughout the whole New Testament. Recently, I went to an ophthalmologist to check on my eyes.

The older Lillian gets, the harder I have to see these things, you know. Especially those red letter editions of the Bible. One of my thieves is, I can't see it.

The red is so hard to read anymore. Anyway, he found out there was a reverend in front of my name. And, you know, that's always interesting for conversation.

So, when he found out that I was religious, in his words, he said, let me tell you how David killed Goliath. I said, all right. He said, you know, Goliath had a pituitary problem.

And that's what made him grow nine foot nine inches tall. And when you have a pituitary problem, one of the byproducts of that is you don't have good peripheral vision. So, David's advantage was to scope out the eyesight of Goliath and get in his blind spot.

And when he got in the blind spot, he just threw the stone. And that's how he got Goliath. Luke doesn't do that.

That's my point. Luke doesn't try to rationalize. You remember in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Peter tried to defend the Lord and took the sword.

And I'm not sure how he did that. When he cut off that man's ear, some people think that he tried to cut his head off and the guy died. And he got his ear.

Some people think he tried to part him right down the middle and got his ear. I think knowing Peter, he's probably trying to get the sword out of the sheath. He got it on the way up.

I don't know how he got the ear, but I know that Luke, when he records it, he said Jesus picked it up and just healed it. He doesn't try to explain the surgery. He just calls you to childlike faith because he wants you to have certainty.

Now, I love the doctrine of the virgin birth. I don't have any problem with that. Our Lord Jesus was born from a virgin, the virgin Mary.

I'd have believed that if Matthew told me. I'd have believed that if Mark told me. I would have believed that if John told me that.

But God saved it for Dr. Luke. I'm so glad the doctor told me that Mary was a virgin, see? Because he's just calling attention to... He doesn't try to explain it. He just sets it out there.

A glance, if you would, at these verses. Verse 126, Now in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph of the descendants of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. Just the facts, man.

Just the facts. And Luke just gives you the facts. And then look at verse 34.

Mary said to the angel, How can this be, since I'm a virgin? And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you. The power of the Most High will overshadow you. And for that reason, the Holy Offspring shall be called the Son of God.

Behold, even your relative Elizabeth also conceived a son in her old age. And she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. Nothing shall be impossible with God.

And Mary said, Behold, the bondservant of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word. And the angel departed from her. See, Luke didn't try to explain it.

He didn't question it. He laid it out there for the simplicity of childlike faith. He's writing to give certainty.

Certainty comes through faith and not through reason. And so he just lays those things out there for faith. And then one other thing he does, he not only calls attention to historical fact, he not only lays things out for the simplicity of faith, but as you go through, Luke, I'm going to call attention to this.

He also takes your eyes away from faith and puts your eyes on the Son of Man, the object of faith. Over and over again he does it. One of the illustrations I love is from Luke 18, verses 15 and 16.

See, Matthew tells us that parents brought their children. But only Luke tells us that mothers brought, the actual Greek word is babe of a day, brand new babies. Only Luke tells us that mothers brought their newborns, their infants to the Lord Jesus.

Now, you'd expect Luke to stress what faith these mothers had to bring their babies to Jesus. But Luke doesn't stress that. He doesn't stress the faith the mothers had.

He stresses Christ's willingness to receive little babies. See, that's not the same thing. That's an entire different direction.

Now, you understand, if the Lord Jesus was in any way reluctant, if He had been standing on some high balcony or some tower surrounded by forbidding walls, these mothers then would have required faith and daring to bring their babies because they would have been intimidated by His greatness. Nobody was intimidated by our Lord Jesus Christ. How can you be intimidated? He was all smiles.

He had His hands stretched out like this. He welcomed the little babies. And that's why they came.

In other words, we can look at it one way and say, you've got to have faith. Jesus made faith easy by being so approachable. Jesus made faith easy by being so available.

And these mothers brought their babies to Jesus, not because they had a lot of faith, but because He wanted those babies. And He was so obvious in the way He was willing to receive these babies. You're

going to see that all the way through.

When this prodigal son returns, the focus goes on the father, doesn't it? Not on the son. He didn't come back because he had such great faith. But we learn about the father's love and the father's forgiveness and the father's joy.

And all attention takes you back to Jesus, the object of your faith. And so He writes that you might be certain, stresses the facts, calls attention to faith, but then He takes your eyes off faith and puts it on the Lord Jesus Christ. Glance, if you would, at chapter 1, the whole chapter, which means you'll be glancing at 80 verses.

It's a long chapter. That's one thing about Luke. He's very wordy.

I told you at the beginning, it is not the Apostle Paul who has written most of your New Testament. It's not the Apostle John who's written five books who's written most of your New Testament. It's Luke.

Luke has written most of your New Testament. Because when you add together the long chapters in Luke and the long chapters in Acts, and he wrote Luke and Acts, you have actually more written by Luke than by Paul's all of his. Add it together.

And so Luke is the one who gives us most of this. My point of calling attention to the 80 verses is to show you that in the time remaining this morning, there is no possibility of doing a fair look at this wonderful chapter. So what I'd like to do is sort of give you an overview of the chapter.

And then next time we'll pick up some of the technical things on this chapter. Luke chapter 1 basically has two stories in it. And you're familiar with that.

And number one, the story of Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents-to-be of John the Baptizer. Correct me if I say John the Baptist. I've been trying to change that.

I don't call him John the Baptist because some people get confused with the denomination. And so he's John the Baptizer. I still slip back into it.

Sometimes I call him the Baptist. But he's the Baptizer. So the first story is Zacharias and Elizabeth.

And then the second, of course, is Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she's been chosen to be the mother of the son of all mankind. The chapter begins and ends with Elizabeth and Zacharias' story. In other words, chapter 1, 5 to 23.

And then the end of the chapter, verses 57 to 80. And that describes the story of Zacharias and Elizabeth. And then in verses 24 to 56, in other words, the heart of the chapter, right in the middle, that we have Mary's story.

Now, you know there's overlapping because Mary spent at least three months with Zacharias' wife, or Zacharias and his wife, Elizabeth. Now, let me give you the overview of that, and then we'll develop it next time. Of course, now Luke is writing to establish certainty through faith.

And you'll notice that in this chapter, there's a great emphasis on faith. In verse 5 to 25, it's illustrated negatively by Zacharias' unbelief. And then in verse 26 to 55, Mary is the example of faith.

And then the chapter ends in the chapter. Zacharias is God's illustration of unbelief, and Mary is His illustration of faith. Now, look in verse 18, if you would.

Zacharias said to the angel, How shall I know this for certain? I'm an old man, and my wife is advanced in years. When Zacharias heard that he and his aged wife were about to have a baby, he said, How can I know this for sure? My wife is old, and I'm old. As far as the original language is concerned, he used the exact words Abraham used.

Remember way back in Genesis, Abraham said the same thing. Of course, there's a little difference, and we'll call attention to that. I understand where he's coming from.

This old priest now is confused. How in the world is this going to take place? He was bewildered. Then over against that, look at verse 34.

Mary said to the angel, How can this be, since I am a virgin? See, the angel told Zacharias an impossible thing. The angel told the virgin an impossible thing. Zacharias, your wife's going to have a baby.

Impossible. Mary, you're going to have a baby. Impossible.

They both asked the question, How? Zacharias got blasted for unbelief. Mary got credit for faith. What's going on? They both asked the same question.

And Zacharias is the one that is accused of unbelief here. Now, obviously there's a difference, because God said Zacharias had unbelief. And even if I'm not able to explain the difference to you, we know there was a difference, and God saw it.

This is an illustration, I think, of how we can say the same thing, and God looks at the heart. Just because we say the same word doesn't mean that it's coming from the same motive. In one case it came from unbelief, another from heart.

So if somebody asks a question, don't necessarily think that they're unbelieving. There's such a thing as an inquiring question. God loves inquiring questions.

They're rooted in faith, and God answers them. There are such things as a questioning question. That's rooted in doubt, and God does not like questioning questions.

And we have that illustration here. In verse 18, this is what I think is the difference. When he said, how shall I know for certain? I think he was saying, how can it be? When Mary said, how can it be? I think her how can it be really amounts to, how will it be? In other words, I think Zacharias was saying, give me some proof.

This is impossible. How can that happen? My wife is old, her womb is barren. Mary said, really? I'm going to have a baby? How are you going to do this? You see, I'm a virgin.

What instruments are you going to use? How are you going to perform this miracle? And so it sounds the same. How are you going to do it? But I think he said, how are you going to do that? And she said, how are you going to do that? One was faith, one was unbelief. And God sees the difference.

Now what a contrast between this old priest, established in the truth, and this young virgin. You got to remember, we don't know for sure how old she was, but she might have been as young as 14 years old.

14, maybe at the oldest, 16 years old.

And when you see the faith of this teenager, I've raised six kids. And I remember when they were 13, and 14, and 15, and I didn't see this. I didn't even know the Lord Jesus when I was 15 years old.

It was after that that he finally saved me. I'm amazed at this tremendous faith. One thing that makes Zacharias' faith, or his doubt so insidious, is that he had a history of precedence.

In other words, God had done that before. This wouldn't be the first time God opened an old wound. He did that for Sarah.

He did that for Rachel. He did that for Rebecca. He did that for Hannah.

Zacharias could have drawn on God's faithfulness to others in the same situation. One thing that makes Mary's faith so remarkable is there was no precedence. There was never anybody that God ever did that for before.

And she had to trust God for a new thing. Imagine a teenager trusting God without precedence for a new thing. And that's exactly what Mary did.

And so this contrast of his unbelief and her faith is very, very powerful. Now, we're not going to have time to look at his unbelief and her faith. We will by and by.

So I'm going to set Mary aside for a moment, and we'll pick her up in a special study. I want to mention in closing a couple of things we can learn about the unbelief of Zacharias. And then, actually, I haven't even told you about the priest and the casting of locks and which order he was in.

We'll get into all of that detail next time. But I just want to look at this unbelief and this faith. Notice verse 3. He's in the temple, and evidently, there were about 20,000 priests in Jerusalem alone, according to Josephus.

They didn't all get to minister. And he finally got his turn. So it was a big day for Zacharias.

And he's in the temple, and all of a sudden, Gabriel shows up. The Bible doesn't say that he came. He didn't see him appearing.

All of a sudden, he was there. And in verse 13, he said, Do not be afraid, Zacharias, your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will have a son. What is that? Your petition has been heard.

What prayer? I doubt the old man went to the temple as an old man as he was. Said, I think I'll pray for a baby. I don't think so.

Now, some think, well, it's a bigger expression, and maybe he was just praying for Messiah to come. And in that way, his petition was heard. But I don't think so.

I think what Gabriel is saying is, Your petition has been heard. You prayed for a baby, and God's going to answer your prayer. And I can picture Zacharias scratching his temple and saying, Yeah, 40 years ago, I prayed for that.

Or 50 years ago, I prayed for that. He probably forgot he prayed for that. It was so long ago.

I think one of the things we can learn from this is that God often delays his answer to prayer, but he never forgets prayer. Boy, may God burn that into your heart. He never forgets it.

He's filed every prayer that was ever prayed in the will of God. And you might forget it. And I might forget that we even prayed that thing.

And we might be surprised out of our socks when God finally says, Your prayer has been answered. When you were 21, you asked me for this. Here it is.

If an angel suddenly appeared to me and said, Your prayer has been answered. It was something I prayed when I was 16 years old. I'd say, What kind of bureaucracy are you running up there? Why the red tape? What's the hold up? How come it took so long? And so on.

I remember when Lillian and I got married, we wanted so much to honor the Lord. And we kept the suitcase packed. And on top of the suitcase was a note.

Anyplace, anytime, at any cost. And we kept it packed. The idea was, if God calls us, we're going.

Well, it's been many years since that suitcase has been packed. We needed the stuff inside. I hope my heart's the same.

But since that time, there's been a lot of roots that have sunk. And now we got stuff. A lot of stuff.

It's all over the place. If God all of a sudden comes up and says, Hey, Ed, anyplace, anytime, today, leave, now, go. I'd say, Hey, Lord, there was a time I meant that.

But right now, I don't want you to answer this prayer. It's an amazing thing. We ought to really walk softly before the Lord in terms of our prayer.

And remember that God takes our prayer seriously. And when you pray, you may forget you even prayed. But bless God, He does not forget.

And this is wonderfully illustrated here in chapter 1. We can also learn a couple of things from Zacharias' unbelief. In verse 20, he said, You'll be silent, unable to speak, because you did not believe my word. If you read the chapter carefully, you realize there was a double whammy put on Zacharias.

He was not only mute. I don't like the word dumb because the Lord has given my wife and I a deaf child. We have a deaf child.

And there are many deaf in our family. And through the years, we've been through that little thing, deaf and dumb. And some of their peers didn't exactly know what the word dumb meant.

And they used it in the wrong way. So, I like mute in that connection. Zacharias was made mute.

He couldn't speak. But he was also made deaf. You say, How do you know he was made deaf? Did you notice in chapter 1, verse 62, When they talked to him, they talked in signs.

He not only couldn't speak, but he couldn't hear. In verse 20, it says, You shall be silent, unable to speak, until... And then God says, Until the day these things take place. I'm not going to judge you.

I'll just look at my own heart. I know in my own heart, very often there's unbelief. And I'm so thankful that my unbelief does not hinder the will of God.

Your unbelief does not hinder the will of God. You'll be dealt with. But God's will will go on anyway.

She still got pregnant. She still had the baby, even though he didn't believe. How did it affect him? You see, he was the priest.

And after he performed the incense service, he was supposed to come outside, quote, number six, raise his hand in benediction and say, The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. But because of his unbelief, he could not bless the people.

And I think it's a wonderful principle there. My unbelief will not hinder God's will. But it robs me from the blessing.

And when I have doubts, I can't bless somebody else. And so Zacharias, until he had faith again, he wasn't allowed to bless the people. I would love to sit here and tell you that what Zacharias experienced his doubt is just for rebellious skeptics, people who don't want to believe God.

But when you read the record, do you realize Zacharias was a wonderful servant of the Lord? And his wife Elizabeth was a wonderful servant of the Lord. Many priests in that time were heartless formalists, no doubt, but not Zacharias. Notice in chapter six, or rather chapter one, verse six, it says that they were righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

I call attention to that to remind you that doubt can be found in the choicest servants of the Lord. I don't think you'll ever get to the place in your life where I won't doubt anymore. I am sometimes amazed at how doubt can creep in.

You know, God has a history of faithfulness in your life and keeps coming through and blessing you, and then the next thing you doubt him. And you just sort of feel so ashamed and you want to beat yourself because you've allowed that silly thing to creep in. I think Satan would rather have God's people doubt than commit immorality.

That doubt is a terrible thing and it's the root of so much. Isn't it interesting to note that when things were going tough, remember now, God hadn't spoken for 400 years and Zacharias was still seeking the Lord. No word from God, Zacharias is seeking the Lord.

He had prayed 40 years ago or so for a baby. God didn't answer. He's still serving the Lord.

He's still seeking the Lord. He's doing fine. Now all of a sudden, God coming in to bless him.

The lot falls to him so he gets this privilege to go into the temple. An angel shows up, brings good news. His prayer has been answered.

Everything's going great. Then he doubts. When things are going badly, when there's no word from God and God's not answering prayer, he does fine.

And as soon as God comes through, he says, oh, no, it can't be. Too good to be true. I've seen that in my life.

Oh, I can trust God in the rain. In the sunny day, doubt. What are we made of? You know, we're just clay.

And all of this is illustrated in this wonderful man, Zechariah. So we learn that God never forgets prayer. We learn that unbelief might hurt you and rob you of the blessing.

It won't stop God's will from being done. We learn that unbelief can be found in the choicest of God's servants in the best of times. One more thing and we'll wrap it up.

The whole purpose of this, the reason Luke writes, is that you might be certain. And did you notice what Luke said to Gabriel in verse 18? How can I know for certain? That's all he wanted. And so he asks for these signs.

He says, give me a sign. After all, in Genesis 15, Abraham asked for a sign. In Judges 6, Gideon asked for a sign.

In 2 Kings chapter 20, Hezekiah asked for a sign. In Isaiah chapter 7, Ahaz asked for a sign. And it isn't Zechariah saying, I just want to be sure.

Give me a sign. I just want to know for certain. I don't want a doubt.

Give me a sign. And God through Luke is saying, if you really want to be certain, then trust Jesus. Certainty comes through faith, not through sight.

Certainty comes through faith, not through sign. An evil and adulterous generation, Jesus said, seeks after a sign. Well, this gives you an idea, a taste of the first chapter.

God contrasts faith and doubt. Zechariah's doubt marries tremendous faith. And from his doubt, we learn that God always remembers prayer.

That unbelief robs you of a blessing. It won't stop God's will, but it robs you of your blessing and the right to bless others. That the best servants of the Lord sometimes fall into this terrible thing and doubt the Lord.

And that certainty, if you really want certainty, trust God. That's how to get certainty. Trust the Lord.

It comes through faith. Well, there's more, a lot more. We haven't finished this by a long shot, but I hope this gives you a taste for chapter one.

Comments or questions? All right, let's bow, please, before the Lord. Father, we thank you for your word. And we don't want to doubt you.

And often they just come and sit there. Pray that you'd forgive us for that. We pray that when we are doubting, that you'd shut our mouths until we praise.

And then open our mouth to let your praise be known. Thank you for this contrast in doubt and faith. And we just pray you prepare our hearts.

That we might be those who go forward in the certainty of faith. Work it in us, we pray, for Jesus' sake.

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