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God is Holding on to You

By Elise L. Moore

There's a remarkable Bible incident involving the human tendency to doubt that good is supreme. A storm is raging. Jesus calmly walks over the waves. Peter steps out of his comfort zone—a boat. He is stunned to discover he's walking on the water.

It should be a joyous moment. But Peter is pragmatic. What about the wind shrieking, the water crashing, the lightning ripping and thundering? The melee is too much for Peter. Instead of rejoicing in the power of good over evil, Peter literally sinks.

Jesus saves Peter and wonders aloud, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Matt. 14:31, New International Version).

Peter might have responded that there were lots of reasons! Ships were lost at sea. People died daily. When the disciples had gone to Jesus' hometown, few people were healed or believed the Gospel. John the Baptist had just been beheaded. What next!?! Peter was drowning in a sea of doubt.

Maybe you feel that way. Maybe it seems very pragmatic not to trust God's existence and power, when evil happens daily. Jesus, however, saw God's power reigning supreme on earth. He gained immediate dominion over doubt and discouragement by focusing on God instead of on material circumstances. There might have been a million threats clamoring for attention, but Jesus focused on the one truth that God, Spirit, governs and overcomes evil.

Jesus began his ministry preaching, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Meaning, the power of good, the supreme harmony of God, governs on earth. Jesus overcame the doubt of the world—and healed people of sickness, sin, and even death.

We each have a choice. We can either drown in doubt, like Peter. Or we can let the Christ, Truth, lift us up mentally and save us. As the divine idea of God coming to each individual's consciousness, the Christ is present today to dissolve the cloud of doubt and discouragement. If we will turn away from the storm of human circumstances and seek Christ single-mindedly, we, too, can find salvation and healing.

I had an experience that illustrated the value of radically turning to the one God and being single-minded. The doubts you are facing might be different, but what I learned might be helpful.

When I was 13, I took horseback riding lessons. My dad made reservations for us to go riding at a local resort hotel on a hot summer day. By the time we arrived, all the horses had been rented. I was crushed. Dad was insistent. Wasn't there something? They produced a horse that they said would be fine for me. We wouldn't be riding on a trail, but there was a big ring and Dad could watch. They had a Western saddle, too, and I'd only ridden English saddle—but I thought it couldn't be that different.

Off we went to the ring. There was a girl about my age taking a lesson in one corner, but plenty of room for me to ride around. I started applying English signals for the horse to trot and canter. Not much happened. This was embarrassing. The instructor took a few minutes to teach me the proper signals for a Western-style horse. They were very different. Even the way he told me to hold the reins was different. But it seemed to work. The horse began to canter and I began to smile. Success at last.

Somehow it had eluded me that my horse was becoming increasingly resistant to moving out of the shady area and into the hot sun. I was concentrating on holding the reins right, giving the proper signals, and impressing my dad. The next thing I knew, instead of breaking into a canter, the horse went straight up into the air and proceeded to bounce stiff-legged around the ring.

The other girl started screaming. The instructor yelled instructions. And I started to pray. At the first buck, I lost both stirrups. However, the English riding training paid off. I gripped as hard as I could with my knees. I never was scared. But I had no earthly idea what one was supposed to do with a horse gone wild. I couldn't differentiate between the screams of the girl and the shouts of the instructor, so I tuned them both out. I just turned to God. I literally held on to thoughts of God. And I knew God was right there holding on to me.

There's a wonderful Bible verse in Isaiah—"For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee" (41:13). Now, I might not have thought of that specific verse while bouncing around the ring, but I felt the strength of its message with me. I had no doubt that God was there. As long as God was in control of me and my thoughts, I was safe. So I just kept thinking, "God is here."

On about the tenth bounce, the instructor managed to grab the reins. I was still in the saddle, still holding the reins, still unafraid and confident that God was in control. Actually I thought the whole affair was my fault, that I'd given the wrong signal. But it turned out the horse hadn't been fully broken, which is why he was in the stable. My dad was upset with the stable

management, but I wasn't. God had been right there with me, and I'd never felt outside of His strong hand. Actually it had been an adventure, and I'd certainly succeeded in impressing my Dad.

You may never ride a horse. I haven't for years. But I learned several lessons that day about handling doubt that have been helpful ever since.

First, I learned not to blame myself when trouble threatened. I hadn't caused the horse to buck, nor had I attracted inharmony into my life. Blaming oneself for problems or seeking a logical cause for evil isn't metaphysically sound. It's the counterfeit of spiritual thinking. Spirituality reveals that God is the source of right action and that the divine cause is harmonious and good. There is nothing within God's spiritual creation to attract its opposite. Men and women created in God's image reflect His harmony in the expression of goodness. Evil is like a wrong note in a song; when you learn to play the song correctly, the wrong note disappears. So instead of seeking a cause for evil or blaming yourself, it's more effective and freeing to know evil doesn't have a reason to exist and can be overcome.

Next, I realized that God's creation is innocent. Claiming my God-given innocence freed me to pray effectively and feel God's presence. Seeing your innocence is recognizing your spiritual identity as God's idea. This strengthens your conviction that good is real and that God's power and grace are alive in your life.

Third, turning to God, to good, as the cause of action freed me from fear of chance and accident. Instead of being apprehensive about the future, wondering what could go wrong next, I began realizing that reliance on God's law brings safety. The laws of God are as supreme on earth as they are in heaven. God governs the physical universe through divine law. Neither chance, accident, nor fate is outside the law of God. They can't act independently or contrary to the Christ, Truth, which is consistent and constant, governing the human through application of divine law. As it says in Romans, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (8:2). The Christ that Jesus fully embodied brings the assurance of safety and salvation to human experience today. Christ is the divine idea destroying chance, sin, and mistakes. Through Christ, we can find safety by clinging steadfastly to God's supremacy.

Finally, I learned the value of not being influenced by another person's fear or doubt. The other girl in the ring became hysterical. It wasn't her horse that was out of control. Yet she became so frightened at what she perceived as my ordeal that the instructor had to yell at her to be quiet. After grabbing the reins to my horse, he left me to remove her from the ring. I remained unafraid, but she was terrified. Right then I saw something of the deceptive nature of fear and doubt. There was no reason for this girl's panic. Yet she was mesmerized by the situation and

it overwhelmed her. I saw how vital it was to break the fascination of the human mind with negative images and forcefully turn away from them. Doubt and fear are irrational, and they lead to irrational thinking. Just as Jesus wasn't influenced by Peter's doubt, so we can defend our thought from the doubts of those around us.

Through spiritual reasoning, we can reject fear and doubt as worthless. A passage in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy explains how to do this: "When the illusion of sickness or sin tempts you, cling steadfastly to God and His idea. Allow nothing but His likeness to abide in your thought." God's likeness includes countless spiritual and moral qualities, such as strength, vigor, purity, perfection. The passage continues, "Let neither fear nor doubt overshadow your clear sense and calm trust, that the recognition of life harmonious—as Life eternally is—can destroy any painful sense of, or belief in, that which Life is not." (p. 495). Clinging to God lets in the Christ. It reveals that His power and grace are holding on to you and lifting you up from the doubt of the world. We can hold steadfastly to God and find safety and salvation, trusting more and more in the supremacy of good.

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