

## Benefit of a Doubt

How often and how loosely we use this common phrase as an excuse to end thought and to then proceed on a presumption, the validity of which we have chosen not to examine with any serious thought or concern. In this “modern” society where deep and genuine thought has been almost entirely replaced by “feelings” and “knee jerk” reactions, superficiality is the reigning queen of this present day “intellect.” Sadly, this also describes what is called the “Christian church” because it is today difficult to distinguish any difference between the “church” and most any other modern social club. In Luke 18, Jesus asks rhetorically, “...when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on earth?” Of course, He knew. If He were to have answered His own question, I suspect His answer would have been something like “not so you would notice.” Regarding feelings, Mark Twain observed over 100 years ago that “we all do no end of feelings, and we mistake it for thinking.” How profoundly true this observation was and is even more so today. With that think-destroying power of television and other modern sources of spoon-fed intellectual pabulum our society is being fed, rare is the opportunity, desire or even real capacity of the average individual of today to actually engage in much of anything beyond superficial “small talk” conversation. Even when the rare opportunity for genuine thought and intellectually serious conversation presents itself, ensuing discussions are very often soon aborted due to the curse of relativism, which negates any affirmation of right or wrong. Also quite often, due to the abject ignorance of understanding of the subject by one or both participants in the conversation, very little edification results. On a general basis, how could it be otherwise, when nearly all information and educational sources are so controlled that what is available is only that which the controllers have chosen to disseminate. Because of this severe distortion or omission of truth as provided by the media and the educational system, which are the average person’s primary sources of information, any serious discussions that may occur is highly unlikely to lead to any truly accurate conclusions, but instead, more confusion.

In today's world, as it has always been, Scripture is the only consistently reliable source of genuine, unvarnished truth. While there may be lively discussions regarding interpretation on many issues among knowledgeable true believers, there should never be disagreement as to the fundamental doctrine around which a genuine saving faith is concerned. But how many who follow today's prescribed "rituals" through which one is alleged to obtain salvation, have sufficient Scriptural knowledge to distinguish truth from falseness in this most serious of all matters? Isn't it most common to enter this realm through some prescribed ritualistic method, and then to give way to a presuming of salvation by simply giving one's self the "benefit of a doubt?" Lacking any challenge to the presumption from seemingly reliable sources from either the pulpit or from others whom one might presume to be acceptably credible sources, how is one to conclude anything else? But how much "benefit" can there be in a benefit of a doubt? It sounds to me like a very dangerous way to approach this most profoundly serious of all possible circumstances.

The greatest obstacle to discovering any truth is the presumption that one already has it. Knowing a few verses in the Bible does not, by itself qualify one to understand the way to salvation, nor should it give one any assurance that he or she possesses it!

As I ponder this issue, it occurs to me that an acronym may be a useful tool to bring out the essence of what this essay is about. Clever, catching phrases, image generating names and acronyms seem to be powerful and persuasive tools of the word meisters who engage in forming public opinion. Let's see if one here will tend to strengthen the intent of this message.

**Benefit Of A Doubt B.O.A.D.** Well, this isn't a real word, at least it's not in the dictionary, but its sound-alike, bode, is. Which means "to be an omen of; portent: news that bodes evil for humanity." To my way of thinking that's not too far removed from what may quite often be the result of having the benefit of a doubt. But let's try what might be a relevant acronym. B.O.A.D.? **Beware Of Avoidable Death.** That seems to apply appropriately to what the benefit of a doubt can do to the soul when there is no

spiritual benefit in the doubt. D.O.U.B.T. also provides a very meaningful and appropriate acrostic applicable in a similar vein. **Danger Of Unexamined Biblical Truth.** In the context of spiritual truth and the way toward salvation, we must never assume that there is any benefit, but only the Danger of Unexamined Biblical Truth.

Please, dear professing Christians, neither I nor any other person but God Himself can judge whether or not you are redeemed, but perhaps you can! You may if you will only BOAD, beware of avoidable death for your soul by seeking the Godly way that is through precluding DOUBT, the danger of unexamined Biblical truth. How can you justify giving yourself the benefit of a doubt regarding this most profound of all matters? Learn not from here-say and the deceptive easy-on-the-ears platitudes being spewed from so many pulpits and TV / radio “evangelists” who care more for fame, fortune and filled pews than they do for simply saving souls. Go into the Scripture! Discover the real truth direct from the truth source, from God Himself as He provided it for you and me in the greatest of all books, the supernaturally authored Holy Bible. If you consider yourself inadequate for the task, enroll in a small Christian Bible study group, one that examines every verse and does not avoid the difficult passages. Give no opinion offered, the “benefit of a doubt,” even from the pastor or any other study leader. Think carefully and ask questions making sure that the answers satisfy, and are based on the Scriptural context of the verse in question. Seek additional sources of interpretations, but use only those whose credentials are well proven. There are many older ones especially from the past two centuries, such as Spurgeon, Wesley, Murry, Ironsides, Barnhouse, Baxter, Young, McGee, etc., and even a few reliable ones today such as Missler, MacArthur, Hunt, Cloud, Ice, Fruchtenbaum, Gendron and a few others. I have personally studied the works of each of these and can vouch for their integrity as to biblical interpretation. They may vary in some details, but they are, in my opinion, in appropriate unison regarding important doctrinal issues. But if you choose to seek such sources, don’t rely on my recommendations, but check their work against Scripture wherever a question, a doubt or a concern arises.

I pray for you, and I beg you, dear professors of the faith, look into the matter to which you may have given the benefit of a doubt. B.O.A.D. Beware of avoidable death of your soul, and preclude the D.O.U.B.T., the danger of unexamined Biblical truth. Don't give your precious salvation up to simply a benefit of a doubt! Check it out with fear and trembling! Know you are saved through a thorough understanding of exactly how salvation is to be had, and just how it is evidenced in a changed life.

Salvation is a very simple thing to achieve. But the ingredients that go into it, and that provide evidence of its validity, are not that simple. Basically, it may boil down to simply an eleven-inch problem, the distance from the head to the heart. What could have been a saving faith if it reached the heart, very often never leaves the head. On the other hand, it may leave the head, but on its way down to the heart it may encounter difficulties, distractions and DOUBTS. Don't give those doubts the "benefit." Remove all doubts, distractions and difficulties through knowledge of God's Word so that the pathway to the heart may be cleared, and that intellectualized faith in the head may become the essential spiritual saving faith by the time it reaches the heart. Know this! This process has nothing to do with emotion, or feelings!!! They may be present during the process, but they have NOTHING to do with salvation! It's factual, knowledgeable, unrestrained commitment to Jesus as Lord, whom we are to obey, and Savior, who can save us because of His death on the cross, His resurrection, and His ascension to heaven. That spiritual passageway between mind and soul must be kept open at all times even after one has been redeemed. That's not easy. When it gets constricted, backsliding occurs. Doubts, distractions and difficulties are always there trying to close the passageway. They must be fought every day, often moment-by-moment through prayer and obedience, in order for the saved soul to be effectual in serving our Lord.

I pray that anyone who has accepted the fact of his or her salvation in any other way than through God's Word, seriously studied and considered, will stop giving it the benefit of a doubt, and proceed diligently to remove that doubt and seek the full assurance such a matter deserves. Keep in mind that presumption, assumption and ignorance in this matter are tantamount to ignoring the warning to BOAD, Beware Of Avoidable Death of the

soul. Study Scripture seriously so that there will be NO DOUBT, so that there will be NO **D**anger **O**f **U**nexamined **B**iblical **T**ruth. Remember that faith is the absence of doubt. Don't let your faith be damaged by doubt.

*Note: The expression of the acrostic, D.O.U.B.T. came to Cindy as she typed the first draft of this paper. It is here incorporated because I believe the Holy Spirit led this dear sister in Christ to this thought that He wanted included.*