

Erasing Our Doubts of God

Psalm 73

Intro:

I. Consider the following list of well known Bible characters: *Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Habakkuk, & Peter*

A. What is it that all of these men and women have in common?

1. Perhaps you think of their various expressions of faith, or maybe their close personal relationships with God the Father/Son:
2. There is something else that they have in common as well: *Doubt*

II. Most often we use these men as examples of great faith; we tell of the battles they fought, victories won, the miracles that God worked through them, and in many cases even read the words they wrote to learn God's will.

A. And yet each one of them, in spite of their deep devotion to God, experienced moments of Doubt: times when they questioned God's plan, His power, or even His justice:

1. Recall Abraham's multiple occasions of feeling the need to protect himself instead of trusting in God-- *Genesis 12 to Pharaoh, and Ch. 20 to Abimelech of Gerar*
2. Moses repeatedly excuses himself from duty, doubting God's instructions in spite of God's repeated attempts to show He is with Moses-- *Exodus 3-4*
3. Joshua following the defeat of Israel at Ai seemed to be in doubt over several aspects of his faith-- *Joshua 7*
4. Elijah fled for his life from the wicked queen Jezebaal: *1 Kings 19*
5. Habakkuk questioned God's justice over sending Babylon to destroy Judah: *Habakkuk 1*
6. Peter doubted the Lord on the water (*Matt. 14*) he doubted His judgment in *Matthew 16:21-23*, and in many other ways along the way.

III. But most importantly, they all had this in common as well: *they overcame their doubts:*

A. There will come a time for each of us when we will have to face doubt of some kind: to be faced with doubts is not sinful in and of itself-- they are a trial. What we want to strive for is that we can overcome those doubts, strengthen our faith, and live on in service to God:

B. There is another servant of God who suffered from doubts that we haven't mentioned yet: Asaph: You may recall him from your reading of the book of Psalms-- he and his sons were great contributors to our wisdom literature.

1. Asaph in the 73rd Psalm leaves for us a record of his journey through doubt, the struggles that followed, and his triumphant affirmation of faith in Jehovah.
2. For the remainder of our study, we will focus on reading though this Psalm together, and taking note of the different traps that doubt can lead us into, as well as how we can put them behind us:

I. Doubt: Is a Universal Problem: (Psalm 73:1-2)

a. Does anyone believe that they are beyond struggling with doubt?

i. Asaph begins his Psalm with his conclusion: God is good! And yet while this is the conclusion that he reaches after his struggles with doubt-- it is also something that he had already previously believed:

1. The Psalm is not the record of someone who has never believed, and undergoes a stunning transformation! Asaph was a righteous man who was following God under the belief that He was good and just-- but was threatened with having that belief torn away:
2. In v 2 he states that he came *close* to stumbling: that his feet *almost* slipped:

b. Consider this: What is the difference in knowing something on an academic/ intellectual level, and allowing knowledge to affect your life?

- i. Someone may *know* that speeding on the interstate will land you a ticket...
- ii. Someone may *know* that they need more space to stop on slick roads
- iii. Someone may *know* that working without sleep will make you sick.. etc.

1. And yet if someone doesn't allow their knowledge to impact them in a practical way-- then it is all but useless!

c. Do we have an academic knowledge that God is good? Is it just a concept or a saying?

i. How does our belief that God is good to His people impact our life in times of doubt?

1. In times when we are worried over physical comforts and needs?
2. When we fret over politics and world affairs?

3. When we struggle with spiritual growth?
- ii. An academic belief in God's goodness opens us up for doubt in all of these areas: a working knowledge of God's goodness leads to trust and comfort:

2. Doubt: Creates Shortsighted Disciples: (Psalm 73:3-9)

- a. The specific instance that caused Asaph's doubt was the seeming triumph of the wicked: He did not like what he saw-- and even worse-- he was envious!
 - i. Verse 3 starts off these verses in an important way-- speaking of the *arrogant*-- That was part of Asaph's complaint: They are wicked, and they are getting away with it!
 1. v 3: All they seem to do is prosper!
 2. v 4-5: They are immune to the troubles of life that good people have to go through!
 3. v 6-9 Because God isn't doing anything about this, they are emboldened to do more!
 - a. There is no shame on their faces: and because they are unopposed, they plot even more evil: v 7
 - b. They mock God's people and do so from a position of authority!
 - c. Every word is one with the intention of blaspheming
 - ii. I cannot think of a better description for the aggressive attitude of the world, sometimes the government, and especially the media against Christianity.
 1. That makes these verses especially relevant to us: Follower of Christ has gone from something that is admired, to social stigma:
- b. Doubt will cause us to look at the amount of negative attention like a scoreboard: They are winning! They are getting in all the highlights-- the best quotes, the smartest people!
 - i. Doubt will cause us to forget who is in control, and forget that the consequences of their actions *will* come in time:
 1. But before Asaph could resolve his doubt, he had one other charge to raise before God:

3. Doubt: Will Isolate Us: (*Psalm 73:10-14*)

- a. What follows Asaph's initial complaint is a question of Justice: What he describes is very well what often happens:
- b. Because the wicked seem to go unpunished, and they grow even bolder in their rebellion against God, and speak out against God, speaking of what they are "getting away with"
 - i. Those that are weak in their faith will be drawn away under the illusion that they are crossing over to the "winning" side.
 - ii. The people drink of the lies of the wicked, and turn around and question God
- c. Meanwhile, The righteous seem to have nothing but trouble:
- d. If it is going to be this way: then what is the point in following God?
 - i. Doubt will give us the all alone attitude: It will give us the, I'm on the losing side mentality: Nobody wants that! We want to be where the prosperity is!

4. Doubt has ONE Cure: (*Psalm 73:15-28*)

- a. Look at v 16: Asaph could not figure this out on his own! Try as he might when he used his thinking it was bound to the wisdom of man: it was clouded by doubt; as much as he may have tried to sort out the world's seeming injustices, all he could perceive was trouble:
 - i. Until he came to the presence of the Lord: Then he perceived their true end:
 - ii. Not only was he able to see that true end of the wicked, he was able to see the damage that he was causing to himself by allowing doubt to take hold:
 - iii. Unresolved doubts are damaging: They cause us to be bitter and cause us to lose our sense!
 - iv. But resolved doubts bring great rewards: A stronger faith in God: the knowledge that God is our strength and portion, and the trust to allow that affect how we live.