

# Gamma 26

## Study 7

Praying Our Doubts: A Study of Psalm 73 - Part 1

### 1. What is the emotion of the psalmist in Psalm 73?

The psalmist is expressing doubt.

### 2. Why is the psalmist feeling that way?

The psalmist starts off by stating what he knows about God (v1), but struggles and envies (v2-3) when he sees how the ungodly are seen to be enjoying life without seemingly facing any consequences for their ways (v4-12).

It depicts the psalmist's internal conflict, envying the seemingly carefree and successful lives of the wicked. He is troubled by the prosperity and lack of apparent consequences for wrongdoers, which sparks doubt about God's justice.

In contrast, he feels that he kept his heart pure and innocent in vain because he is afflicted all day long (v13-14).

### 3. How is "doubt" defined in relation to "unbelief" and "faith"?

Doubt is defined as being "in between" faith and unbelief, like having "a foot on both boats."

It is a state of uncertainty or having two minds, whereas unbelief is the rejection of a proposition (e.g., God's existence), and faith is the acceptance of it.

This psalm shows that doubt arises from struggling to reconcile what we see happening in the world with our understanding of God's goodness and sovereignty.

The significance lies in the fact that doubt can lead to deeper faith when it prompts believers to honestly confront their questions and seek God more earnestly, rather than avoiding or suppressing their struggles.

Doubt does not necessarily exclude sound trust in God.

**4. Reflection Question - What doubts have you experienced in your spiritual journey?**

**5. What common misconception does the Church often have about doubt, and how does that impact the believer who is struggling with doubt?**

The Church often views doubt as the opposite of faith, leading to a perception that doubting individuals are "bad persons" or lack genuine belief.

This perspective can make it difficult and painful for those struggling with doubt, sometimes leading to their exclusion from the church community.

According to Os Guinness, the root cause of our doubts lies not in our faith but in our humanness. Meaning: we have doubts because we are human, finite beings who cannot see the future and may not fully comprehend our past.

Churches, therefore, need to recognise this is not an issue of faith or the lack of it, but the limitations of our humanity (finiteness).

**6. Reflection Question - What has been your own experience of the church when you struggled with doubt?**

**7. What are the "triggering factors" for doubt?**

The main triggering factors for doubt identified are situations where "what we see does not correlate with what we know" and new experiences.

This includes observing the prosperity of the wicked while the righteous suffer, or perceiving unfairness and disparity in the world.

**8. In what ways might wrestling with doubt lead to greater intimacy with God?**

Theologian Gary Helm suggests that individuals should use their time of doubt as an opportunity to explore their faith, grow stronger in it, and understand what they believe and why. Doubt should not be seen as a weakness but as a chance for spiritual growth.

Philip Yancey suggests that from a human, finite perspective, God will sometimes seem unfair because humans are "trapped in time" and cannot see the full picture. He suggests that true fairness will only reign at the "end of time," when all wrongs are righted and every evil punished or forgiven.

**9. Reflection Question - How can I be of help to a brother or sister who is struggling with doubt?**

**Takeaway**

Doubt is common and real in a believer's spiritual journey to maturity.

It is not something to be shunned nor embarrassed about - not "a chink in the armour".

Instead, it is an opportunity to grow our faith in Christ.