

Gamma 26

Study 8

Praying Our Doubts: A Study of Psalm 73 - Part 2

1. How did Mother Theresa experience doubt despite receiving recognition for her work with the poor?

Mother Teresa's personal letters reveal "silence and emptiness" that is so great to the extent that she looked but did not see and listened but did not hear.

She had many unanswered questions that she was afraid to uncover. She even questioned if God's existence was real, which she viewed as blasphemous.

The emptiness within her was so great that she felt nothing touched her soul.

So much so that she even wondered if she made a mistake surrendering blindly to the call of her service.

2. Why is doubt referred to as part of the human DNA?

It is because humans are finite beings.

This means we are unable to see the future and at the same time completely understand our past.

3. What is the cause for doubt?

Doubt arises because there is a "mismatch of what we see compared to what we know".

More specifically, it is defined as "The discrepancy between what one observes in the world (e.g., wicked prospering) and what one intellectually believes about God's justice or goodness".

4. Why is doubt necessary in our journey to spiritual growth and maturity?

The discrepancy highlights a tension between perceived reality (what we see) and our deeply held convictions or theological understanding of God (what we know).

This is a trigger that forces us to address our understanding.

If we refuse to accept what we see (rejecting the proposition), we end up with unbelief.

If we accept (does not mean we like it), we will “wrestle with God” like Jacob did in Genesis 32:24-30 and potentially come away with a limp but with a blessing.

That is our spiritual growth and maturity.

5. What are the ways to deal with doubt as suggested by Tim Keller?

Tim Keller suggests 5 ways to deal with our doubts; they are:

- Reexamine the motives behind our doubts.
- Deliberately engage in worship with others and regain insight.
- Compare footholds.
- Feel for His hand.
- Make God our refuge.

6. What was the motive for the psalmist's doubt?

The psalmist was “envious” of the wicked because of their prosperity (v3) and they were always at ease and increased in riches (v12).

The root cause for the motives (whichever they may be) is in unmet desires/needs.

It is important for us to remember - truth does NOT depend on what we like or on what makes sense to us.

b) What can wrong motives do to us through our emotions?

We become bitter (v21) and as a result we don't listen to reason and harden our hearts toward God (v22).

7. What did the psalmist do to deal with his motives?

He recognised it was futile for him to understand the mismatch on his own and the weariness that comes with it (v16).

The understanding/discernment came to him when he went into the sanctuary of God (v17).

This meant he re-engaged in worship of God, and in doing so, regained insight because he remembered who God is and what He has done (Deut 5:15).

b) Reflection Question - how does the Lord's Supper enable us to do this?

8. How did "comparing footholds" helped the psalmist deal with his doubts?

The psalmist compared what will be the reality for the wicked (v18-20, 27) against what is reality for himself in abiding in God (v23-26, 28).

He is able to do this by remembering how God has been faithful delivering His people in the past (Genesis, Exodus etc).

This helps him trust that God will be true to His Words in continuing to deliver His people from evil in the present and in future.

9. How does "feeling for His hand" work?

Imagine a little child instinctively reaching out to hold his/her father's hand in a sea of people.

The touch reassures the child of his presence and greatly comforts him/her even if he/she is still struggling with the unpleasant emotion of facing the crowd.

Our very craving or longing for God is a sure sign of His "hidden presence" in our lives.

10. Why should we “make God our refuge” in dealing with our doubts?

If we do not run towards God when we doubt (or other troubles) we will be running towards something else - whatever they may be, they are but a poor substitute.

Because we have been designed with a longing only God can fulfill.

11. Reflection Question - How do we promote the desire for God instead of those substitutes that do not satisfy?

Takeaway

Having the right treasure in our hearts determines our motives and is crucial for us to deal with our doubts effectively.

Our Heavenly Father knows what we need and is ever ready to give what we ask.

If only we would seek Him, desire Him and run towards Him instead of the things on earth.