

### 1. Introduction

- a. The psalmist (Asaph) is a religious person writing about the doubt he now feels in God because what he has expected is coming true
- b. Doubt can be a good thing (it makes us rethink our intended expectations for a particular situation) and a bad thing (it causes us to lose hope in the face of adversity)

### 2. The Slipperiness of Doubt

- a. Doubt is having what we see not line up with what we believe and we begin to doubt—as the psalmist is recognizing here.
  - i. V. 1 he announces to the people that he believes
  - ii. V. 2 he says he is unstable (like being on water or some unstable ground)
    1. He had been living for God and was now ready to get rid of it all—to chuck his faith out the door
  - iii. V. 4-12 is the psalmist looking at the external aspects of those who are excelling in life, getting ahead
    1. And what he is seeing doesn't correspond to his expectations of living a good, moral life. V. 13-14 show that he was a righteous man
    2. And yet he is continually bothered by the reality around him that doesn't line up with his expectations (v. 14)
    3. By all accounts, he had lived a good life of innocence.
    4. Yet when he sees the external it doesn't line up with his expectations of what ought to be given to him as a righteous man.
- b. Ultimately, his doubt comes from a moralistic expectation of reward and comfort which doesn't correspond to the external reality he is experiencing.
  - i. He's not getting his due part of what he sees around him.
  - ii. Injustice makes us question God—why are these things happening? Why is life unfair?
- c. What does doubt do?
  - i. Negatively: they make us unstable in our thinking and heart. But this is only when we come to God with what we think He ought to be doing (see v.2 and v. 15)
  - ii. The Psalmist comes to God with a certain way of looking at God and he is set up for failure because his expectations aren't being met.
  - iii. Positively: doubts can lead us to certainty if we bring our doubts to God and ask the hard questions (v. 17, he takes his doubts to God and then if given the proper perspective in v. 18)

### 3. The Refuge of Grace

- a. In the NT, we learn that the opposite of doubt (i.e. faith) is not in what we see (Hebrews 11:1)
  - i. In order to fix doubt and avoid “slipping,” we have to begin to have a faith in something we haven't seen but yet hold to be true because we've experienced it.
  - ii. What we "see" appears to be reason, but faith is believing in something that runs not counter to reason but counter to what we think we see.
  - iii. Faith is holding onto something in spite of the appearances but in conjunction with the experience we have known in the past.
- b. The psalmist takes a few practical steps
  - i. V. 22-recognize we tend to be stupid and ignorant of our situation
  - ii. V. 23-24: The Hebrew here actually means that God ushered the psalmist into his arms and held his right hand meaning that he put him into a place of glory.
  - iii. How do we reconcile these two realities? Grace.
    1. This is the gospel: in our doubts, we are stupid and ignorant like little children most often.

2. We base our doubts not on what is real in our hearts, but what we see and appear to witness.
3. But in our doubts, it's God who does the work to bring us closer to him. He is the actor in this drama and we are the recipient.

#### 4. Conclusion

##### a. Practical Application

- i. When you doubt, doubt your doubts because they are most often rooted in the dishonest wantings of our hearts not lining up with our righteous expectations of what God should give us or others (v. 13-14)
  - ii. Go to the sanctuary (v. 17): you can't get through doubts by just thinking-you need the experience. We need to sing. We need to confess doubts to God and community openly.
  - iii. Take his hand: (v. 23) "you hold my right hand" is an idiomatic way of saying that God is in complete control
- b. The hymn says: When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace; In every high and stormy gale, My anchor holds within the veil. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.
- i. The Psalmist is doubting, he's grieved and is a beast yet God has held his hand throughout.
  - ii. The Psalmist went into the temple and saw the sacrifices for sins of the people-he would have had to see the altar and known the significance of it.
  - iii. But we know something deeper.
    1. Jesus experienced perhaps the greatest moment of doubt when God let go of his hand and gave Jesus spiritual instability for us.
    2. He was completely faithful to God and God turned his face away from it.
    3. God gave him what doubters deserve so that we doubters know that God will never let go of us.
  - iv. Only relying on this real experience of God holding your hand and letting go of the hand of his one and only son will deeply change you. You'll have doubts, yes, but they won't crush you because you'll have the ultimate certainty that God is for you both in the big things and so much more in the small things.
- c. How do we know God is always with us? Because he went to the greatest length to prove it to us.
- i. Emily Dickinson: That I shall love always, I argue thee, That love is life, And life hath Immortality, This -- dost thou doubt -- Sweet --, Then have I, Nothing to show, But Calvary -
  - ii. Calvary-Jesus on the cross is the ultimate way in which we know God will never let us go. Our external reality may not line up with our internal perception of God and his ways, but he is there none the less in the greatest act of sacrifice when he turned his face from his own son so that we could get the face of God forever and in all circumstances.