

Introduction: Good morning Image church ... I hope you are doing well today. My name is Nathan Neufang and I am one of the pastors at Hebron Baptist Church over on the other side of Atlanta in Dacula and it is a joy to be out here with you guys today. Our church played a part in planting Image church, so it is awesome to celebrate God's goodness to you. I always feel like it is a part of us when we celebrate what God is doing in you and through you!

I'm really grateful for your staff here at this church and their faithfulness to love and to shepherd you guys. I'm thankful for Mike, Aaron, Bryson, Anna, and the rest of the staff here. I love when I get to come out and see what the Lord is doing here at Image.

I really believe God has some incredible things in store for Image Church in the days ahead and I am so excited to play a small part in what God is doing here. Today we are going to continue the series in the book of Psalms.

Today we are going to be looking at Psalm 73. So, hopefully you have a bible or a phone that has a bible on it and you can start making your way to Psalm 73.

Illustration: How many of you like basketball? I love college basketball. I have always loved the tar heels, but I really love the passion of the sport and I love the NCAA tournament. A couple years ago, South Carolina beat Baylor to go to the elite eight. This was incredible because before that season they had not won a tournament game since 1973. They won and tied the amount of wins they have ever had in the tournament in that one year.

After the game, when they beat Baylor, there was a press conference and a question was asked from a kid that writes for Sports Illustrated for kids. He talked about the defense played by South Carolina. They were tenacious! He asked the question is defense more important about technique or attitude. Frank Martin, the then coach for South Carolina responded, "Attitude comes first. We have to have guys who believe in our mission. It all starts with our mindset."

Today we are going to be talking about Doubt from Psalm 73. I want us to see that what Frank Martin says about defense is also true of our attitudes towards doubt. This sermon is more about reorienting our hearts and minds towards God to help deal with doubts, rather than a list of things to help you doubt less. So to clarify, today is not a ten steps to doubt less, or here are the steps to deal with doubt. Instead, I want us to see that **Worshiping God changes our perspective when we doubt.**

But let me talk about a few things before we jump into this passage.

- It is not a sin to doubt. Doubt has the ability to do 1 of 2 things. Drive us to either unbelief and away from God or deeper into our relationship with God. But it starts with our posture and attitude towards God.
- Doubt is the moment when you are unsure, and in that moment you have the ability to trust God and believe or not trust God and choose unbelief.
- Approach is everything.
- The opposite of faith is not doubt, it's unbelief. Doubt says I'm just not sure.
- God is true completely and there is nothing fake or false about him, so seeking the truth will always be profitable.

- The beauty of the God we serve is that doubt actually allows us to further trust Him and press into the relationship we have with God.

MIS: Worshipping God changes our perspective when we doubt

Background: The Book of Psalms is filled with songs that were sung for different purposes within the life of the Israelites. It is a book that describes the human reactions and responses to God. A lot of the psalms are raw and show real emotion. And I love the psalms because it mirrors my own experience in my Christian life. Sometimes things are great, sometimes things aren't great. But I love the honesty from the writer. It comforts me to know that I can be honest with God with how I am feeling and He actually invites that!

The Psalm we are going to be reading today comes from Asaph. Asaph was one of the chief musicians and comes from a line of worship leaders in Israel. So, he is David's Worship leader in his cool Robe and hipster glasses, and layered Jackets, you worship guys know what I am talking about.

Asaph wrote 12 psalms. And we see some serious doubts from Asaph because the worldly people look like they are prospering, and Asaph doesn't feel that it is right. But his remedy is to remember the goodness of the Lord and trust Him.

MIS restated: Worshipping God changes our perspective when we doubt

1) Remember that God is good (1)

GOD'S WAYS VINDICATED

A psalm of Asaph.

¹ God is indeed good to Israel,
to the pure in heart.

- This is the statement of faith from the Psalmist.
- This is what believers know true of God.
- For those of us that are Christians, we believe and know that we serve a good God.
- "Israel" is talking about those who truly worship God. God in the Old Testament made a covenant with Israel, and in the New Testament we see that believers in Christ are grafted into this same covenant.
- The NT tells us that we are grafted into Israel through Christ.
- That is why the phrase pure in heart is so important.
- This is what he knows and v. 2–3 is how Asaph feels.
- **Application:** It is vital that when we have doubts about who God is and what he has done for us that we go back to what we know is true about God. Because as we will see, our experiences don't always line up with what we know to be true.
- Part of reorienting ourselves when we doubt is to remember God.
- This is why reading the Word is so important. Not just to check a box, but instead to remember what God has done!
- Do you read the Bible as a book that reminds you of God's goodness?

- The whole Bible is a story of God's goodness to His people and we need the Bible as the reminder. It is a story of His goodness towards humanity, even when we don't deserve it!

2) Look past our current circumstances. (2–12)

² *But as for me, my feet almost slipped;
my steps nearly went astray.*

³ *For I envied the arrogant;
I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

- **We doubt when our circumstances seem to contradict what we know is true of God.**
- The word “But”, or sometimes it is translated as “nevertheless” is a sharp contrast for the psalmist.
- Asaph admits that he started to doubt. The statement that he knows to be true—God is good—seems run contrary to his current situation. He knows what is true but it just doesn't seem like it is true right this moment.
- **Doubt happens when what we know is true of God doesn't line up with our experience.**
- Asaph knew that God is good and yet he sees wicked arrogant people “thriving” and this leads to doubt and frustration.
- V. 1-3 Summary – These verses summarize the whole Psalm. Verse 1 is the basic takeaway message, and then verse 3 describes where doubt had led the writer. Like so many times Israel thought the grass was greener somewhere else (Baal worship, wanting to go back to Egypt after the Exodus, etc.), the writer nearly stumbled because of the apparent, though temporal, prosperity of the wicked.

- Illustration: Communication with my kids. My logic doesn't always work—no matter how flawless it is—on a 6-year-old because his feelings are different than what he knows is true. He knows I love him and wants what best for him, but when he wants candy for breakfast and I say no, he feels slighted. He looks to see if his brother got candy. But he already ate. His feelings don't line up with the truth.
- On a greater scale, Doubt for us happens when our experiences don't line up with what we know is true.
 - I know God is good, but I see things going on around me.
 - I know God is good, but my friends stab me in the back.
 - I know God is good, but I read stories about violence, hatred, and abuse.
 - I know God is good, but I didn't get the promotion I deserve.
 - I know God is good, but people have treated me unfairly.
- Connect: Do you feel this way? When you look around the world, do you feel like the world situations aren't getting any better? Is War, Poverty, Injustice, seem to be out of control? Maybe you hate your job and your boss seems incompetent. Do you secretly feel like you could do a better job? Are you looking around saying I think I would just do that different? Or has your relationship with God gotten to the point where you are just plain frustrating wondering if he is either good or knows that is actually best? Maybe you have envy of other's circumstances. Maybe you feel because you are a good person God owes you something.

- Asaph says that he became envious of others. This was the cause of His doubt.

If you doubt, You are in good company. Some Bible writers felt this way and their thoughts actually made it in the Scriptures.

- Elijah → After Mt. Carmal and defeating prophets of Baal, he asked God to kill him because he was on the run.
- Thomas who walked with Jesus and saw miracles, said he wouldn't believe Jesus has risen until he could touch the wounds in his hands.
- John the Baptist → Send his disciples to Jesus—while he is awaiting death—and is asking the question “Are you the one?”

Justin Holcomb: We should be unafraid to doubt. There is no believing without some doubting, and believing is all the more robust for having experienced its doubts. Kalil Gibran put it beautifully, “Doubt is a pain too lonely to know that faith is his twin brother.” I like that. If doubts are not the opposite of faith, we can be a bit more open and honest about them with ourselves, others, and God.

- Doubt is not the opposite of faith. Unbelief is. Doubt give you the ability to dig into either faith or unbelief.
- Let us look at why Asaph doubted.

*⁴ They have an easy time until they die,
and their bodies are well fed.*

*⁵ They are not in trouble like others;
they are not afflicted like most people.*

⁶ Therefore, pride is their necklace,

and violence covers them like a garment.

*⁷ Their eyes bulge out from fatness;
the imaginations of their hearts run wild.*

*⁸ They mock, and they speak maliciously;
they arrogantly threaten oppression.*

*⁹ They set their mouths against heaven,
and their tongues strut across the earth.*

*¹⁰ Therefore his people turn to them
and drink in their overflowing words.*

*¹¹ The wicked say, “How can God know?
Does the Most High know everything?”*

*¹² Look at them—the wicked!
They are always at ease,
and they increase their wealth.*

- From Asaph’s viewpoint, the ungodly people have made it!
- V. 4 says their bodies are fat and sleek—this seems to be a funny way to talk about people. Next time you go to the CrossFit gym, ask them for a fat and sleek body and see what they tell you.
- V. 5 say their lives seem to lack trouble like everyone else.
 - **Illustration: Instagram Life- Picture perfect and everything seems to be in place.**
- V.6 Pride is their necklace- is a way of saying they wear their pride as a status symbol.
 - We might say their pride is their watch, or shoes, or car.
- V. 6–8 They are not even ashamed of the violence they act foolish and don’t care how they act and treat others.

- Doubt comes from a struggling mind, while unbelief comes from a stubborn will that refuses surrender to God (v. 7).¹
- V. 12 is a summary of 4–12. The wicked doubt God’s character, not just their circumstances.
 - They aren’t saying that their circumstances are difficult, they are saying God is not good.
 - Asaph is doubting and question these people because their lives are good, but what about God’s character? Doesn’t God care that the wicked are saying things about him?
- The doubt is leading Asaph to envy. But he is recognizing where doubt is leading him.
- In His doubt Asaph is leaning away from God not towards God. Because he is more focused on circumstance than God.
- When doubt leads us to self, we actually are once again stuck in the comparison trap... If doubt has me focused on me, then I am primed for entitlement and bitterness.
- *Application: Where is my doubt leading me? Am I pressing further into God or am I looking to validate myself. Are my doubts leading to envy and bitterness towards God? Or greater faith making me trust God more. Am I like Asaph where I look at my circumstances and envy?*
- Doubts can either lead to the truth of Verse 1 and 28 or we can express unbelief in God.
- When we focus on us our unbelieve grows, when we focus on God our believe and trust in Him grows.

Transition: But the real problem for the Psalmist is he is so worried about the other people circumstance, but he fails to

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful*, 1st ed., “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004), 238.

recognize that he has the greatest gift of all and we see that is the second truth in this text.

3) Bring your doubts to God, instead of trying to fix them yourself. (13-17)

*¹³ Did I purify my heart
and wash my hands in innocence for nothing?*

*¹⁴ For I am afflicted all day long
and punished every morning.*

*¹⁵ If I had decided to say these things aloud,
I would have betrayed your people.*

*¹⁶ When I tried to understand all this,
it seemed hopeless*

*¹⁷ until I entered God's sanctuary.
Then I understood their destiny.*

- V. 13–15 talk about how the actions of the faithful doesn't seem to add up to the difficult circumstances they are now facing.
- Asaph is saying that he has done all these things, but nothing is changing, or at least it isn't happening fast enough.
- Look at V. 13- He tries to wash his hands and fix himself.
- The experiences of Asaph don't add up to what he think should happen given that he is a believer.
- This get dangerous for us when we get to this place. God doesn't owe us anything but death, but instead of death He gives us something better His Son!

- When it comes to judging circumstances of others, Doubt is short sighted, because it focuses on ourselves. Doubt should lead us to focus more on God.
- So after seeing that he couldn't fix his issues, he did the best thing he could do. He went to the temple and worshiped.
- Asaph brought his doubts to the temple and chose to worship despite his doubts. You see before he tries to "fix" his doubts he has to focus on God who reorients him.
- He is admitting he is looking at his self and trying to justify to God that he has gotten a raw deal.

- But that is why gathering with others and worshipping God is such a big deal.
- **Worship doesn't eliminate all doubt, but it does reveal a Big God who can handle our doubts.**
- This is why it bothers me when I see people that aren't unengaged during worship!
 - When you refuse to Worship you are not allowing God to deal with your mess, because you are too focused on you!
 - And sometimes you come here and don't feel like worshipping, but that is all the more reason to engage. God can reorient our hearts towards Him during worship.
- God is inviting us to bring our doubt, even to worship.
- Your pastors want this to be a place where you are allowed to bring your doubts.
- God is truth perfectly, so he is not scarred of your doubts.
- **Illustration: If I have a disease, the best things I can do is to go to a doctor and get it diagnosed and treated. The worse thing I can do is keep it a secret and ignore it. So often we are**

afraid to bring our doubts to God, because we are afraid we will be judged or no one will understand. We are afraid that someone will tell on us. But our doubts are more like a disease and less like a secret. We need it to be exposed and treated by a doctor. Jesus is the great physician and invites our doubts.

Listen to me... we have a disease and it is called sin. And when we tell you that you cannot fix it yourself and you need God to fix it. But the Bible says we lay down our sin at the cross. Jesus is the only one that can fix it.

Transition: So how do I change my perspective on doubts. We worship and that is the third and final truth.

4) Viewing God rightly changes my perspective of my doubts. (18–28)

Illustration: VR headset. Looks really goofy when people walk around experiencing it. Really funny when people fall over. But the reason why it looks weird is because our perspective is different than the one with the headset on. Worship may not change our circumstances, but it helps us to change our perspective towards our circumstances that causes our doubts.

*¹⁸ Indeed, you put them in slippery places;
you make them fall into ruin.*

*¹⁹ How suddenly they become a desolation!
They come to an end, swept away by terrors.*

- Look at all the action words attributed to God in this passage of scripture.
- Set, make them fall, destroyed, swept away.
- God is active even when we doubt Him, he is working all things for His Glory and our Good.
- God is sovereign meaning that he is in control of all things.
- The people who also slipped “doubted” didn’t have an anchor to hold onto like Asaph. Without God, our doubts will lead to a depressing end because we seek things or ourselves rather than God.
- Again, Doubt underestimates the bigness and goodness of God.

*²⁰ Like one waking from a dream,
Lord, when arising, you will despise their image.*

*²¹ When I became embittered
and my innermost being was wounded,
²² I was stupid and didn’t understand;
I was an unthinking animal toward you.*

*²³ Yet I am always with you;
you hold my right hand.*

*²⁴ You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will take me up in glory.*

*²⁵ Who do I have in heaven but you?
And I desire nothing on earth but you.*

*²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart,
my portion forever.*

- This is where Doubt can lead. Embittered. V 21
- It can be devastating to us and lead to envy and bitterness.

- It could lead us away from God, because we focus on ourselves.
- Doubt has the potential to drive us away from God Or it can lead to a deeper relationship with Christ.
- But after He worships look what he states in verse 23.
- God is portrayed as continually with us. Never going away.
- He holds our right hand meaning he is our guide.
- Doubt longs for answers, but Asaph says God's presence will suffice. Even when answers don't come. **This is the perspective change for Asaph.**
- Mystery is at the heart of relationships and mystery invites pursuit. Being ok with not knowing everything leads to pursuit.
- We don't understand some things and that should cause us to trust God more rather than question his character and doubt his goodness.
- V. 26 talks about the difficulty of doubt for us. We will fail and doubt at times, but God can handle that and seeks our good even in the difficulty.

*27 Those far from you will certainly perish;
you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.*

*28 But as for me, God's presence is my good.
I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,
so I can tell about all you do.*

- **V. 28 Doubt is short sighted, but Trust helps remind us of our future. And the avenue of that trust is worship!**
- **Remembering God's character trumps remembering my circumstances. This is where Asaph lands.**

- God, as the greatest treasure, is the prize for the believer— not just “good” circumstances.
- The wicked prospering is causing the author to doubt God’s goodness or His control. Worship and being with God reminds us of both His goodness and control.
- God is good. My circumstances seem to contradict God’s goodness or control. I don’t understand His justice. But After worshipping Him I trust He knows what he is doing.
- God is actually better than any prospering here on earth. The perspective of the author changed after He worshipped God for who He is.
- 3 Applications from V. 28 when dealing with doubt:
 - Stay near to God
 - Rest in God as refuge. Give Him your burdens and trust Him to love and protect you. Trust he can handle your doubts.
 - Tell of His good works. The things God has provided for you, Tell others about those things. Hard to doubt God when you are remembering how God can help.

Conclusion:

I heard JD Greear tell a story about the Missionary Allen Gardiner that helped me understand God’s goodness even in difficult circumstances.

Illustration: In 1851, there was an English missionary named Allen Gardiner. He was on a ship on his way to South America. He was supposed to open up a mission field. Instead, his ship was wrecked on some islands off the coast of South America. He died there, but he lived for quite a while with the survivors. Eventually, they all died a painful,

terrible death of hunger and thirst.

So everything went wrong for him. He never got to the mission field. He died far away from his family. He prayed, "O Lord, rescue me." No one ever came to rescue him, and he died. Later, his body was found. He had a journal. The last thing he wrote in his journal was Psalm 34:10, "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing." The very last line he wrote in his journal before he died ... Underneath that verse was, "I am overwhelmed with a sense of the goodness of God."

His circumstances didn't change. But his perspective did. He saw God for who he is and what he has done in our lives. Gardiner knew he would spend eternity with God in heaven for ever. He knew that the worst of his life here is the closest to hell he would ever experience.

However, today if you are an unbeliever, what you experience here is the closest to heaven you will ever experience.

Just like Asaph You might be longing for better circumstances and seem confused at the seemingly backward nature of his experience. But that's where Jesus comes in. He turns everything upside down by dying for the wicked and making them righteous through his blood. Though we doubt because of our experiences, God asks us you to bring our doubts to Him and worship in a way that reorients our perspective about God. When we see His goodness and sovereignty, we can place our trust in Him.

Doubts don't go away, but a long-range trust helps us believe that the questions will be answered in God's time not ours.

God doesn't owe me an explanation for the things I do not understand. But after viewing Him rightly I can trust him to deal with my doubts. And when I understand He is God and I am not, I can trust that He knows what He is doing.

MIS: Worshipping God changes our perspective when we doubt

Action:

- 1) (Unbeliever) Trust the Gospel. Doubt happens because of sin. Jesus lived a life I couldn't, died the death I deserve, and rose again conquering and defeating death. Bring your questions to God, but see what he did and trust that. All your questions may not be answered but he is big enough to handle your questions.**
- 2) Believer: Bring your doubts to God. Tell him. Maybe go to spouse or pastor here or Community Group leader and ask them to walk you through your doubts.**
 - God is better than our dreams, desires, and our forms of justice. He is good and in control. God will vindicate all wrongs.
 - We worship God not to change our circumstances or to eliminate our doubts, but to realize a Big God who desires us and loves us.