



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

30 – The Anatomy of Doubt

Announcements:

5/23 @6:30 -

Men's

Discipleship

5/25 @7:00 -

Corporate

Prayer

5/26 @6:30 -

Grace Group

5/29 @8:30 -

Sunday School

ICE BREAKER: What was your *least* favorite subject in High School?

READ: Matthew 11:2-6

John MacArthur once said that “doubt is held up as the unique problem of the believer.” There are two thoughts to learn from this. The first is that if you do not believe in something, there is really nothing to doubt! The second is to note that doubt is, in fact, a problem. So how can we deal with doubt? On one hand, the solution is simple. Stop doubting. We could just be cold and factual about it. God’s faithfulness is on display, his attributes are “clearly seen” in his creation (Romans 1) and he has spoken to us in his word -- and through *the* Word (Jesus Christ, his Son), so the problem is just you! But while these thoughts are true, this sort of thing is not often helpful. So instead, today what we are going to do is evaluate what David Platt calls the “Anatomy of Doubt”, to understand how it may affect our souls, and how we can be sure in the face of doubt.

We can start by noting that doubt often **arises from a difficult situation**. In the passage we read, John's doubt most likely stems from the fact that he is in prison. Even worse is that he most likely knows that he will never get out. Here is a righteous man, who's only “sin” was doing what God called him to do and yet he faces the tyranny of Roman jail. So doubt begins to creep in. So too it often is with us. We face difficulties, trials, sickness, pain, and all the other consequences of living in a fallen world and it can become very easy to think that God has abandoned us. In the midst of difficult situations, God’s plan is more difficult to see, his grace and mercy *feel* (but only feel...) far away. Knowing this is important because we can be on guard!

DISCUSS: How can you plan in the good situations to trust God in the difficult ones?

The next thing we can note from our passage is that doubt **thrives in unmet expectations**. A little context is helpful here. If we remember back to John’s preaching WAYYYY back in Matthew 3 he said things about the coming messiah like: “Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees” Implying that he, like many of that day, expected the messiah to come in power. To fight inequity and injustice, to rule and conquer! But all he hears of Jesus is that he is doing healings. John, most likely, had some expectations of what the reign of the Messiah would look like (and that expectation was most likely NOT him ending up in Jail!). So too we find doubt creeping in when we expect God to move and work in a certain way that seems right to us. His timing rarely lines up with our timing and we expect him to work things out, not just for good, but in the good way that I want him too! And it is in these unmet expectations that we find the seeds of doubt.

DISCUSS: What is the solution to our unmet expectations?

But finally we should note that doubt is **rooted in our limited perspective**. This is really the underlying issue with both the previous problems. We don’t have the eternal sovereign heavenly viewpoint that God does. We can’t often see around or out of the situations we find ourselves in. We are frail and don’t always understand the great ways of God. We often don’t know what we don’t know and so we find ourselves doubting. It is understanding THIS that makes the “advice” above make sense. While we only have a limited perspective we can see one thing: What God has seen fit to show us. Specifically: God’s faithfulness is on display, his attributes are “clearly seen” in his creation (Romans 1) and he has spoken to us in his word and through the Word (Jesus Christ, his son), so the problem is (and here we can be a bit more gentle) that we try to see things outside what God has illuminated. Knowing that our perspective is limited can help when we start to doubt.

DISCUSS: Why is it so important for us to focus on what God HAS shown us and not what we think we want him to?