

Pondering the Ruin of Doubt

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

Well, hello, and welcome to Ponder by NorthernLife. We're having a conversation about the Word of the Lord, as it was preached to us on Sundays, and as we experience it in our everyday lives.

We are continuing our sort of short episodes on the Roads to Ruin series, and today we're talking about Tristan's sermon on doubt. I'm joined by Jono, Ben, and Tristan, and my name is Jack.

Tristan, do you want to give us a quick overview of what your sermon was about?

Yeah, so when we were looking at doubt, I proposed that it's almost like a rip current, and we have two responses, or three responses, but two responses that lead to ruin when it comes to doubt, and that's swimming against the current, which is your

very rigid ways, unquestioning, being very dogmatic with your faith, and just like almost bearing your head in the sand when it comes to all the questions of unwavering belief. And then to the other extreme is when the current just takes you, and it

floats you so far away into just a land of questioning, where it's this endless cycle that doesn't really resolve into trust for God. You just stay in your question, so that's the other response.

And then we find our narrow way through doubt, is by holding both of those intention, intention like belief and your questions.

And that's found in faith and giving it to God, and actually outstretching your arm and saying, Lord save me, Lord help me. So like really looking to try to find that narrow road in between.

So yeah. It's good. Yeah, absolutely.

Now Jono, you were talking, we were talking just before the pod, about what the, what ruin actually looks like. And you were quite passionate about that the ruin that doubt reeks is quite terrible. Do you want to go over a bit of that?

Yeah, I feel like doubt is a pretty yucky struggle really, because it leads you to unbelief.

And if we were to try to paint a picture of what does ruin look like in life, unbelief is about as bad as it gets, because it leads you to eternal destruction.

Yeah, that's, I think, doubt was there at the start, is what the devil used to lead Adam and Eve to disobedience. Doubting God and His goodness. Yeah, unbelief is a terrible thing.

It has a terrible fruit.

Yeah, brings to mind that line that says in Genesis, did God really say? Like, that's just, yeah, that's doubt inviting.

Yeah.

It's interesting that the kind of root of sin was a question, did God really say? But then also, you look at the Gospels, Jesus was constantly asking questions as well.

So question, you made that great point, Tristan, that the questions are not the bad thing, but there's kind of a deeper posture beneath the questions. Some of them lead to ruin, and some of them lead to a deeper faith.

And so the trick is trying to find, or the narrow road is trying to find the difference between those types of questions.

Yeah, I found the dogmatic point interesting.

Because I certainly take your point in terms of, there can be a certain anti-intellectualism that develops in churches, where we're so defensive, and we don't want to accept any other knowledge or any other questions.

But at the same time, there's a certain sense that in faith, you submit the things you don't understand to God, and you admit the limits of your knowledge.

And I guess, yeah, I don't know, what are you guys' thoughts on sort of the line between sort of a trusting faith and like dogmatic sort of belief?

I love the fact that Tristan comes from a different place. And that point for Tristan is quite different to us. He comes from South Africa and has seen that first point, you know, live, haven't you?

Oh yeah, for sure.

People just like, there's a conservative, maybe, maybe religious, you know, appropriating of a way.

And it's like, it becomes brittle. That's what you've said, isn't it?

Yeah, it's almost like you hold conservative tradition over religion. That's the general consensus that you have.

And growing up in that context, it's being very conservative, yes, and focusing very hard on doing the right things, so there is no room for question.

So trying to work really hard to get to a point where, like if someone's depressed in your family, it's like, oh, how can you be depressed when you, when you're part of our family and we serve God?

Like it's that sort of deep-rooted, like if you're doing the right thing, God has got you. And how can we question? Who are we to question?

That's the other side of it, is who are actually, like, who are we such weaklings to question? That's the side that I was really coming from, which is probably not the same here. It's like very different, so.

How have you seen that lead to ruin?

I've seen that lead to ruin where you have someone, and this is real life, you have someone grow up throughout the church, has all the head knowledge, but it hasn't really hit them in the heart.

Like it hasn't really had that time to, to set and really have meaning. Like that was me until I got saved, where I knew the answers in Sunday School. And then I softened my heart, and it really just took over me.

And I think when it leads to ruin, when it's that sort of dogmatic, just working through it, you're trying to find the answers yourself, but all the answers are found in Christ. You're trying to work hard to find something.

If we had that, if that was true, then there's no need for a Savior. There's no need for Jesus. If we are constantly trying to find answers, and we're supposedly finding them.

So it leads to ruin when we lose that dependence on God and what that means to really rely on Him in those times of weakness, instead of ignoring it. Is the culture so like very different here?

I think the phenomenon you talk about does exist. I don't think it's as widespread as you're saying in your context, but I think we all have no, at least individuals, families, and individual churches that are like that.

And to your point, there's aspects. You can kind of see how people get there, right? So you're talking about who are we to question, right?

That's trying to come at it from a place of humility, ostensibly anyway. So you can kind of see how they get there, but it's, I think, to use a term that was used in your sermon, Jono, there's a disordering there.

It's almost a disordered humility or a disordered faith. It's brittle where the faith is not strong enough to bend and flex with questions. I don't know.

That's my experience.

And look, sometimes it's encouraging to have that person who's just like, oh, you know what? God's got this.

Or, like, it's good to sometimes have someone that's so strong-hold and rock-solid in their belief and their faith, and that's the good side of it. But we're, I was trying to really focus on what it means to go too far in that way.

Yeah, it's a good point. That's one of the beauties of the body of Christ. That as we stand shoulder-to-shoulder in church, I'm doubting, but the person next to me is solid in faith and their faith helps build me up.

And I can do the same for my brother or sister next to me. It's kind of that picture of the unity that we have together as the body.

And I think, I think maybe one, I'll put this out there and you guys can respond. Maybe one way we could draw a line between healthy and unhealthy expressions of this is, whether you're willing to take other people's struggles seriously.

Yeah, that's a very good point.

Yeah, like someone comes to you saying, oh, I'm really, I'm struggling with this x face to face. I don't know about this. If your response is to say, no, don't worry about it.

Just, you know, how could you answer? Okay, that's probably not healthy. But if you say, okay, I can see why this is a serious issue.

Let's work through it together. That strikes me as a much more healthy way to say, yeah, I'm faithful and I believe this, but I'm also gonna understand why you are doubting this way and take your concerns seriously.

For sure.

One thing with the youth leaders I tried to, we all try to focus on at the start of term twos.

We all sat in this meeting and I said, when it comes to those difficult questions or when it comes to those difficult conversations that sometimes might seem remedial to you because you've dealt with this issue before in your teenage years or just in

your faith journey, it's always helpful to not go so quick to give them the solution for it. It's actually listening first and actually probably not even saying anything.

Sometimes I'll have a conversation with the youth kid, I say 10 percent at times, because it's just them, like you opening a space for them to really vent everything that they have, and it's just you listening to that.

So I think the start of what a good dogmatic belief person, someone that's so rock solid in their faith or that unwavering belief where you're open to receive that is what you are saying, which is really important, which is what I found faithful and

It is funny, isn't it, that Jesus says, like you quoted, the guy says, if you, what does it say, if you can?

If you can, yeah.

If you can, yeah.

You know, and Jesus goes, what do you mean if?

Like, like he's actually, in contrast to our whole discussion now, he's so like, I'm looking for faith, like robust, unbridled belief, but he also totally acknowledges that doubt is part of it. So there's a dance, I think.

There's actually a genuine, now this is your point, the dance between faith, doubt and unbelief is real. We just want to avoid unbelief as much as we can, but you can't really have full faith without the capacity for doubt.

Faith doesn't exist without a portion that's unknown, where you go, I don't know, Lord, I'm trusting.

Yeah, I feel like that's so well illustrated in the passage you chose, which was Jesus walking on the water, and he calls Peter out to him, and it's like, oh, that's the faith he's calling.

He wants you to step out of the boat and try and walk on water and do the impossible. And yet, obviously, Peter tries to do that, and then he doubts, but Jesus also catches him when he doubts as well.

And I feel like that's a great analogy of what you were just talking about, Jono.

And the big difference is, what direction are you heading? Are you heading through the questions toward Jesus or away from him? Because one leads to the ruin of kind of deconstruction, which is a kind of buzzword in our generation.

And the other leads to a deeper faith in the real Jesus, who reaches out his hand towards you.

I think it can be really helpful to just reframe doubt as mystery. To say, I'm called to faith, can't please God without faith. But will there be mystery about tomorrow?

Because I don't get to make up what happens tomorrow. So, I've got faith. And then when it doesn't turn out the way I expect, I don't have to doubt his goodness or his character.

I can just live in the mystery and be assured that's not going to change. There's a sense of mystery for the day after it as well, because it's calling me to faith.

So, when I have my doubts, I need to go, no, maybe that's the mystery of God, and just keep coming back to his goodness.

I would, you just mentioned the buzzword of deconstruction, and that got me thinking. I would say that, and you guys can respond, there's a case we made that a certain level of healthy doubt is actively healthy for your faith.

And that's because faith is mediated to us through the teaching of the people around us, and by our perceptions of who God is. And sometimes doubt helps us to tear down false ideas of who God is, to get to a clearer vision of what he looks like.

And sometimes you need to doubt, oh, is this right? And then you come to a result, oh, actually, I was wrong in thinking about this about God. He's actually more like this.

And doubt can be a way to trim off, yeah, doubt access perceptions of God and actually lead us to a truer and deeper level of faith.

Yeah, good. That's a good point to wrap it, I reckon. That's a great statement.

Yeah, well, in that case, we will finish there.

Thank you all for listening. Thank you guys for chatting, and we will see you on the next one.