

Psalm 73 • Seeing my life correctly

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Calvary Chapel Ontario

Have you ever gotten your eyes off the Lord? And looked at other people and thought, I think they're better off than I am." And looked at like unbelievers and thought, why are they doing so well and I'm not? That seems unfair. And it's like, God, is this the way You treat Your children? That's what's happening in this Psalm.

It's a Psalm of Asaph. And this Psalm begins with the conclusion, which was somewhat common in those days. It says,

"1 Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. (Truly he is)

2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped.

3 For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." (ESV)

What is the psalmist doing? He starts off at the very beginning telling you what the problem was. What his issue was, and he says, I've learned now that God is good. I struggled with that for a period of time because you see, I got my eyes off the Lord and I really almost slipped. I almost stumbled because I started looking at unbelievers. And I started looking at their lives and thinking, okay, he's, that guy is... I keep thinking in my mind, he's looking at his neighbor.

And his neighbor is an unbeliever, never goes to church, doesn't care about God. And yet, the guy is just, he's making all kinds of money. He's got a gorgeous house, got a lovely wife. His kids are strong and healthy. He's got a three car garage with a boat in the third stall and he's just doing good. And he talks like he owns the world.

And here I am, Lord, I mean, yeah, I'm sitting here looking at my neighbor. And here I am a worshiper of God, and I got a one car garage and I'm struggling to keep anything in that alone. And health wise, I don't seem to be doing as good as my neighbor. And yeah, nothing stacks up here.

Look what he says when he goes on to verse 4, and starts talking about his buff neighbor who moved there from California. He says,

"For they have no pangs until death; (In other words, no issues. They live their lives in prosperity. He says,) their bodies are fat and sleek." It doesn't mean he's overweight. That's a term that just means, you look good.

He says,

"5 They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind."

What's the result of that? Verse 6,

"Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them like a garment.

7 Their eyes swell out through fatness;"

And the word, fatness refers to prosperity, having much. Okay. Which... And so when their eyes swell out, it's a poetic way of saying, they see through their glasses of prosperity and they long, they grab for things. They see what they want and they get it.

He says, *"their hearts overflow with follies.*

8 They scoff and (they) speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression.

9 They (even) set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth."

What's the result of that?

"10 Therefore his people turn back to them, and find no fault in them." They draw a crowd. People go, wow, he's pretty cool!

"11 And they say, (things like) "How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?"

12 "Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches."

What's his conclusion?

"¹³ All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence.

¹⁴ For all the day long I have been stricken (It's like I'm getting) and rebuked every morning."

Now he's coming back and becoming the moderator again, of this or the narrator of this. And he says,

"¹⁵ If I had said, "I will speak thus," (or I'll speak this way,) I would have betrayed the generation of your children.

¹⁶ But when I thought how to understand this, (when I tried to figure it out,) it seemed to me a wearisome task,

¹⁷ until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end."

I want you to pause there for just a moment because the psalmist has brought us to the climax of his understanding. He's explained how by comparing his life with his neighbor next door, he seems so out of it. I have so little of what he has. He's healthy and strong. I'm not. He has so many things in the way of prosperity and blessings, which I don't have. And he talks like he owns the world and people love him for it. They think he's great and they flock around him.

And then the psalmist says, had I spoken this way, had I given voice to all of these things, I would have betrayed this generation of your children.

And then he says, and I love this. I love what he says in verse 16. He says, I sat down and I tried to figure all this out. With my own understanding, with my own insight, I said,... I thought, okay, there's got to be an answer to this. There's an answer. I know there is, and it's a satisfying one. I just got to figure it out.

Have you ever tried to figure God out? Have you ever sat down to try to figure God out?

And he comes back and he says, *"it seemed to me a wearisome task."* In other words, I couldn't do it. But what changed?

Verse 17, "(then) *I went into the sanctuary of God.*" In other words, I came into the presence of my Lord. Then I understood. Because You Lord showed me Your perspective. My perspective became oppressive. It became a weight that I couldn't bear. I came into Your presence and then I knew, he said.

And what did he know? Look at the end of verse 17, "*then I discerned their end.*" Very key. Here's what he now has learned,

"18 (O) Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin.

19 (O) How they are destroyed in (just) a moment, swept away utterly by terrors!

20 Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms."

By the way, that term, "*when you rouse yourself,*" that speaks of when the Lord comes forth in judgment. Okay.

He says, you know what?

"21 When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in my heart,

22 I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you."

Do you know why? We talked about this in our study in Luke. We talked about the fact that the natural man who thinks with his emotions, his intellect. Right? And determines things based only on those things.

In other words, Solomon referred to the natural man as the one who lives under the sun. And he talked about that continuously. What is life like under the sun? Meaning to the natural man who has no concept of the spiritual, no concept of the heavens, no concept of God. What's life like to him?

Well, it's fine. As long as things are going okay. But how quickly they're swept away. And when terrors overcome them, they have nowhere to run. They have nowhere to whom to go. Right? There's no recourse.

You go to the world, what good are they going to be? They're all going through the same thing. They don't have any answers for you. They're just going to sit

around going, yeah, it's pretty rough. Let's all get together and talk about how rough it is.

Hey, that's what we'll do. We're going to call it a support group. But really all we're going to do is sit around and talk about what a drag it is to live in a fallen world. Right? I mean, there's no answers. There's nobody to turn to. Because if you find somebody to turn to, chances are they'll be gone tomorrow anyway.

And this is what the psalmist is now realizing after he's getting the perspective of the Lord. He says, when I was like this, when I was thinking like this, I was like an animal. I was literally thinking like an animal. That's why, what he means in verse 22, when he says, *"I was like a beast toward you."*

Here's what he found out though. This is the reality of the situation.

"²³ Nevertheless, I am continually with you; (That means, I'm always there and) you hold my right hand.

²⁴ You guide me with your counsel, (Don't you love the counsel of God's Word guiding your life?) and afterward (after all this world and all that it has and does and what comes after that? He says, after that,) you will receive me to glory."

It's not the end. We don't just become oblivious to all reality when we die. We were created by God to live on. And what is my future? I'm going to go be in Your presence. When this life is over, I go to be in Your presence. That's what awaits believers. And this is what he wasn't taking into consideration.

So he says in verse 25, here's his conclusion.

"Whom have I in heaven but you? And (you know what? He says,) there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

²⁶ (Because) My flesh and my heart may fail, "

No, not may, will. Unless you and I are here when the rapture takes place. Our flesh and heart will fail. That's as simple as that. But he says,

"but God is the strength of my heart (He's the strength behind my heart) and my portion forever.

27 *For behold, (my neighbor and all those like him,) those who are far from you they're going to) shall perish; (because) you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.*

28 *But for me it is (a) good (thing just) to be near God; (Because you see) I have made the Lord God my refuge, that (Here's what I'm going to do from here on out. I'm just) I may (going to) tell of (everybody I can get to listen to) all your works. "*

Because that's my destiny. My destiny is with You. I have such wonderful promises from God. Jesus said, that even though we die, we shall live. We shall live with Him. I think of what He said to the thief on the cross, this day, this day, you'll be with me in paradise. (Luke 23:43)

He didn't say, tell you what, you're going to go to sleep for a long time. And then it's like the roll of the dice after that. You really don't know what's going to happen. We'll wake you up sometime in the near, in the distant future. And we'll just see what happens. And, I mean, if you've been good, maybe St. Peter will let you in. That religious mumbo jumbo.

This day, you will be with Me in paradise. That is our destiny. Right? The lesson here is so powerful. Don't look at what the world has. Don't look at what the people of the world has. And don't look at how they live and compare it with your own. You look at what you've got in Christ. Because in Christ, you have everything. You have everything, because He has everything.