

Psalm 73

6-21-01

“God is Good!”

1. **Intro:**

1.1. **It’s all perspective!** One day a father of a **very wealthy family** took his son on a trip to the country with the firm purpose of showing his son **how poor people live**. They spent a couple of days and nights on the farm of what would be considered a very poor family. On their return from their trip, the father asked his son, **“How was the trip?”** “It was great, Dad.” **“Did you see how poor people live?”** the father asked. “Oh Yeah” said the son. **“So what did you learn from the trip?”** asked the father. The son answered, “I saw that we have **one dog** and they had **four**. We have **a pool** that reaches to the middle of our garden and they have **a creek** that has no end. We have **imported lanterns** in our garden and they have **the stars** at night. Our **patio** reaches to the front yard and they have the **whole horizon**. We have **a small piece of land** to live on and they have **fields** that go beyond our sight. We have **servants** who serve us, but **they serve others**. We **buy our food**, but they **grow theirs**. We have **walls** around our property to protect us, they have **friends** to protect them.” *With this the boy's father was speechless.* Then his son added, **“Thanks, dad, for showing me how poor we are.”**

1.1.1. It’s all perspective!

1.2. Let’s turn to Psalm 73.

2. **THE PSALMIST! (Intro)**

2.1. **Asaph** - a Levite, a leader of David’s choir.

2.1.1. He was founder of one of the temple choirs.

2.1.2. **1 Chron.6:31-33** “Now these are the men whom David appointed over **the service of song** in the house of the LORD, after the ark came to rest. They were **ministering with music** before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of meeting, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they served in their office according to their order.”

2.1.3. **1 Chron.25:1-6**

2.1.3.1. Heman & Jeduthan were the other 2 leaders.

2.1.3.2. **Note** their songs were **prophecy**.

2.1.3.3. **Note** no separation of “church & state”! (vs.6)

2.1.4. **He wrote a dozen Psalms, 50 & 73-83.**

2.1.5. What I like most of Asaph is his **honesty**(like Howard Cosell used to say, “he tells it like it is!”)

2.1.6. **Let’s jump on the back of Asaph’s bike.**

2.1.6.1. Starting on the top of one hill, then straight down, then up the other side where we reach the top again.

3. **WALKING BY SIGHT! (1-16)**

3.1. This psalm recalls the kind of questions that distracted **Job & Nehemiah**.

3.1.1. We'll Asaph's Doubt, Delusion, & Depression, but then his Declaration & Dependency on God!

3.2. **Q:** Where's your focus?

3.3. **EYES ON GOD! (1)**

3.4. **Vs.1** - **the Key** to the whole Psalm.

3.4.1. Here we start on top of the hill.

3.4.2. What a wonderful affirmation of faith!

3.4.3. **Q:** But is it easier to go **downhill** or **uphill** on a bike?

3.4.4. **Q:** How easy is it to go fast when we are looking down a hill?

3.5. **EYES ON HIS NEIGHBORS! (2-12)**

3.6. **Vs.2** - **the Stumbling block** of Asaph.

3.6.1. Here we have "Spiritual Slippage" at its finest!

3.7. **Vs. 3** – **the Problem** he was struggling with. He was enticed by what his neighbor had.

3.7.1. Sometimes things aren't what they seem!

3.7.1.1. **Sweets in Israel**(& most foreign countries) **explain about them...** "**They look so good & taste so bland!**"

3.7.2. He saw all the "**good**" things his neighbor had. But we must realize that what we call "**good**" isn't always what God calls "**good**"!

3.7.3. **Q:** What entices you in this world? Any of these things that Asaph names? (Be honest!)

3.7.4. **Tantalus**, in **Greek mythology**,(king of Lydia and son of Zeus). **Tantalus** was a favorite mortal of the gods until he was caught trying to deceive them. The gods then condemned him to hang forever from a tree in Tartarus, the lowest region of the underworld. **Under the tree was a pool of water, but when Tantalus stooped to drink, the pool would dry. The branches above him were laden with fruit, but when he reached up the wind blew the branches away.**

3.7.4.1. He became the symbol of **utter frustration**. - **Today his name is remembered in the word "tantalize".**

3.7.5. Many things in this world can Tantalize us. - Solomon pursued Happiness through "knowledge, pleasure, riches, & work". **Nothing satisfied the hunger of his soul.** So he wrote "**Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.**"

3.7.5.1. It was only when Solomon focused on **knowing & pleasing God** that he found life's true purpose. "**Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.**" (12:13,14)

3.7.6. **Only Jesus** , the living water, can satisfy the thirsty soul.

3.8. **EYES ON HIMSELF! (13-16)**

3.8.1. **Q:** Is it really worth it to be a dedicated Christian? Is it really worth it to be obedient? Especially when we see so many who disobey “better off”? (What great questions!)

3.8.1.1. What a great bible study to do with your kids!

3.8.2. Well the answer isn't in these verse...not until vs.17.

4. WALKING BY FAITH! (17-28)4.1. **EYES BACK ON GOD! (17-28)**

4.2. **Vs. 17 – the Answer** he found.

4.2.1. The lights turned on when he turned to God Himself.

4.2.1.1. Take your problems to the presence of God.

4.2.2. He saw “**their end**”, or “their afterward”, “their future” that will unmake everything they have lived for.

4.2.2.1. The question isn't “**Where are you?**” but “**Where are you going?**”

4.2.2.2. “**wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction,**”

4.2.3. Look at the world with open eyes, then come to God for the answers to your problems!

4.2.4. When he found Him **not** as an object of speculation, but of worship.

4.2.4.1. **Roy Clement**(pastor of Eden Baptist Church in Cambridge, England)

“Worship...puts God at the center of our vision...it is virtually important because it is only when God is at the center of our vision that we see things as they really are.”

4.2.4.2. **When life seems unfair, take time to worship & get your spiritual vision properly focused.**

4.2.5. He learned that it is not what you own or enjoy...but where you're going!

4.2.6. **Life is all perspective!**

4.2.6.1. **Eye machine**(an “Ocluder”) at my ophthalmologists.

4.2.6.2. Lens are flipped in front of the eye until perfect vision is reached.

4.2.6.3. The chart never changes...only my perspective changes.

4.2.6.4. **One click** of the machine in the wrong direction is “**fuzzy**”!

4.2.7. In life it is often from where you are standing & the perspective in which you are seeing it.

4.2.7.1. Take a **magnifying glass** to a magazine & all you'll see is **colorful dots**.

Take it a ½ a football field away & you'll only see **vague images**.

Take & hold it at your eyes comfortable position & **it all comes into focus**.

- 4.2.8. **Asaph realizes he was looking in the wrong direction!**
 4.2.8.1. You can't look **around**, or **within**, but "**up**" for answers!
- 4.2.9. **Asaph also was looking with the wrong perspective!**
 4.2.9.1. He was looking **too close**, instead of taking a **step back** from his situation.
 4.2.9.2. He was looking at the **natural man** & not the **spiritual man**.
 4.2.9.3. He was looking **temporal** & not **eternal**.
 4.2.9.4. He was looking through the lens of his **emotions**, rather than the lens of his **mind**. (21,22)
 4.2.9.5. ***Most of our problems w/God are our Vision Problems!***
- 4.3. **Vs. 18-20** – "I never knew you", "shame", "everlasting contempt"
 4.3.1. This is God's personal rejection.
 4.3.2. C.S.Lewis, "**We can be left utterly & absolutely outside – repelled, exiled, estranged, finally & unspeakably ignored.**"
- 4.4. We seem to fall into this same pattern of focus.
 4.4.1. We start w/our eyes focused on the Lord...& then to the left or right, back or forth, in or out, down...but not up!
- 4.5. **Vs. 21,22** – Good self-awareness.
- 4.6. **Vs. 23,24** – New insight. He recognized that God has been with him all along & indeed always would be with him.
 4.6.1. "**Better to have your hand in God's hand than in the pocket of some rich sinner!**" (John Phillips)
 4.6.2. **Hold me, Guide me, Receive me.**
 4.6.2.1. Like a parent does for a **toddler** that is learning to walk.
 4.6.2.1.1. **Hold**(reaches down & holds his hand); **Guides**(as they walk together); **Receives**(pull up into His arms.)
 4.6.2.2. As a **blind man leans** on his friend's arm, is **guided** about by him; then **returned** safely home!
 4.6.2.2.1. It is always safe to trust the all-seeing God.
 4.6.2.3. It is the **mariner** out at sea. What is he with out a map & compass?...but lost!
- 4.6.3. **Note: it is right after "I am continually with you"** (God's omniscience)
 4.6.3.1. **Ps.139:7-10** "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there **Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.**"

- 4.6.4. **We are continually on His mind**(His thoughts to me are always thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give me a future and a hope.); **We are continually before His eye**(his eye is on the sparrow & I know it watches me); **We are continually in His hand**(& no man can pluck me out); **We are continually on His heart**(like the high priest who wore the breast plate of the 12 tribes over his heart); & **We are continually as a Seal upon His arm**(Song 8:6).
- 4.6.5. Say it now in your heart, and take the peace it gives.
“Nevertheless I am continually with You.”
- 4.7. **Vs.25** – Charles Wesley was thinking about this verse on his deathbed & actually composed a hymn based on it as his final testimony.
- 4.7.1. He called his wife to him & he dictated, **“In age & feebleness extreme, What shall a sinful worm redeem? Jesus, my only hope thou art, Strength of my failing flesh & heart; O, could I catch a smile from thee, And drop into eternity.”**
- 4.7.2. In the final analysis the only thing that really matters for us is God.
- 4.7.2.1. He is all we have & all we need.
- 4.7.2.2. He sustains us here, & afterward he will receive us into glory!
- 4.7.3. Asaph realized that because he had God as his friend, he needed nothing else.
- 4.7.3.1. He had more then the wicked, & what he had would last forever!
- 4.8. **Vs.26** – “Flesh-failure” & “heart-failure”...ever have these spiritual symptoms?
- 4.8.1. Always remember **“BUT GOD!”**
- 4.8.2. He’s your rock & portion.
- 4.9. **Vs.27,28** – Asaph started w/“**God is good**”; He ends w/“**it is good**”.
- 4.9.1. **Q:** But how did he get back to this?
- 4.9.2. **Draw near!** (opposite of vs.27 **“far from you”**)
- 4.9.3. I have put my **Trust** in the Lord God!
- 4.9.3.1. Not in my imperfect vision, not my neighbors, not on myself!
- 4.9.4. Now what do I do with this info? – **28b** Go declare it!
- 4.9.4.1. “Go tell it on the mountains, over the hills & everywhere!”