

Encounters with the Living God, Part III: Psalm 73 – If God is good, why isn't He?

Asaph, famous leader amongst God's people, reveals his deep personal struggle with the problem of pain and injustice. Look at the world with open eyes; where is God? Is it meaningful to trust him? In this biographical Psalm Asaph tells us how God led him out of the tunnel of despair to a new joy in the Lord.

I. Asaph's Biography

A. Asaph

1. was a musician in the Tabernacle, 1 Ch 6:31-47

2. led the return of the Ark to Jerusalem, 1 Ch 15:17-19

3. ministered before the ark of the Lord as the chief worship leader, 1 Ch 16:4-5I

4. used by the Spirit and prophesied, 1 Ch 25:1-2

A. Asaph's CV

1. friend of king David

2. worship leader in the Tabernacle

3. charismatic

4. gifted author—wrote Psalm 50, 73-83

II. Asaph's discovery: God is good – why then isn't he? v. 1-12

1. Assumption: God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart, v. 1
Focus in all worship: Praise the Lord, because he is good!

2. Asaph's experience goes against his faith
Abundance of evidence that the wicked can prosper, v 2-12

3. Conclusion: all the ancient wisdom is undermined:
"Pride goes before destruction" Proverbs 16:18
"If a man digs a pit, he will fall into it" Proverbs 26:27
We do not reap what we sow!

III. Asaph's struggle – and the downward spiral, v 13-16

- A. Personal pain:
"All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning", v 14

- B. Nearly gave up:
"my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold", v 3
"Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence", v 13

- C. The result:
Asaph envied the wicked, he grieved and his soul was embittered, v 3, 21. He pondered to shift side, v 15. He tried to see through the problem, but couldn't understand it, v 16.

- D. The real problem:
Asaph became a humanist; he had himself as the ultimate point of reference.

IV. Asaph's victory, v 17-28

A. He came to the sanctuary, v 17

B. He saw God's perspective, v 18-20

1. You can't make a final judgement in the midst of the match

2. The future will restore every moral principle

Three views on justice

a. There is no justice

b. Life is just now – law of karma

c. There is a future justice

3. He was drawn into the presence of God

V. Asaph's question

A. Is not given an answer in relationship to his specific suffering

B. Is given a principle answer: God's judgement

C. Is given a personal answer: God's presence

Conclusion

Asaph singing in temple: "He is good; his love endures forever." 2 Ch 5:13
Trust God in the dark