

WHERE IS YOUR FOCUS
On The Temporal Or The Eternal?
Psalm 73

It isn't possible for a person to *see* and *trust* in the *eternal* while their *focus* is on the *temporal*. When we allow ourselves to *compare our life* with the *life of others*... especially a *prosperous worldly man*, doubts about God can *overwhelm* us...just as it did the *Psalmist*. But as a believer we *must learn* to keep everything in *perspective of eternity*... not the *temporal*. The *contrast* of our *destinies* allows us to *keep a proper perspective* on life. Scripture says that in this world, we are *aliens*. Our *citizenship* is in *heaven*. This world is only *temporal*. Our time with God is *eternal*.

“Let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;”
~Philippians 3:16-20

I. THE DISTURBING PROBLEM: (vs. 1-3)

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart! (vs. 1)...

The **Psalmist** begins this **Psalm** with his bottom-line conclusion...that **surely God is good**. He *affirmed* the *compassion* and *benevolence* of God who is *constantly good* to His people...to those who *trust* Him...to those who are **pure in heart**. Those to whom are His *covenant* people.

But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, my steps had almost slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked (vs. 2-3)...

But he confessed that he *came close* to *abandoning* his *confidence* in God's *goodness*. He *came close* to losing his *faith*.

But as for me...this phrase is used **4 times** in this **Psalm** and it's used to *confess his mistake*...his *wavering*.

My feet almost slipped...he nearly *turned aside* from God ...he had nearly *lost his footing*...he almost *suffered a monumental fall* in his *spiritual life*.

What caused it...his *jealousy* in the **prosperity of the wicked**. His *horizontal view* of the world. He became **envious**.

Envious...Heb. *qanah*, means to *covet*...to be *desirous*.

“For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit...”

~Titus 3:3-5

Prosperity...Heb. *shalom*, it's usually translated *peace*, but here it's used to connote even more...*being satisfied, content*...having a *complete, fulfillment in life*.

Asaph had *taken his eyes off God* and *focused* on how those who *don't know* God seemed to be the ones *blessed* ...those who had **prospered**...those who seemed to have a *completeness* or *fulfillment* in their life.

II. THE DISTORTED PERSPECTIVE: (vs. 4-12)

For there are no pains in their death, and their body is fat. They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like mankind (vs. 4-5)...

Asaph described the *troubling contradiction* that he saw all around him...the *wicked* who have *prospered* seemed to have *no struggles*. From his perspective, they *weren't plagued* by the same *problems* that he and everyone else had.

Therefore pride is their necklace; the garment of violence covers them. Their eye bulges from fatness; the imaginations of their heart run riot. They mock and wickedly speak of oppression; they speak from on high. They have set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue parades through the earth (vs. 6-9)...

The *speech* of the *wicked* was *prideful, arrogant, and corrupt*...continually *mocking* God. They acted as if there was *no* God...as if they *controlled heaven* and *owned the earth*.

III. THE DEBILITATING PAIN: (vs. 13-16)

Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence; for I have been stricken all day long and chastened every morning (vs. 13-14)...

In verse 13, the Psalmist dissolved into *self-pity*. He was confused over the *worth of his salvation*. He felt that he had kept *his heart pure* in vain. He felt frustration in trying to *live a righteous and godly life*. Was it all worth it?

But he *overcame his doubts* by considering the *eternal destiny* of the *wicked*. He chose to have an *eternal view*.

When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight (vs. 16)...

One thing is for sure, God *allows us* to voice all our *frustration* and *questions* and *struggles* to Him.

Unfortunately, sometimes when the *harder questions* of life pop up, we allow them push us *away from* God, rather than draw us *to* Him. They seem to be *overwhelming*...or even *unanswerable*. They can make people *doubt* God.

IV. THE DAWNING PERCEPTION: (vs. 17-20)

One of the core things this Psalm shows us is the importance of *never leaving God out of the situations, circumstances, and questions we ask*.

The best way that can happen is when we spend time with Him. The Psalmist calls it *going into* God's *sanctuary*. It's the place where we can *honestly* and *intimately pour out our heart* to our loving Father.

Do you know...whether it's the person asking the questions or the people the questions are asked about...the *love, forgiveness, and freedom* of God *is always there*? None of us deserve any of this. It's called *grace*. And it's all His *gift* to us *without strings, without expectations*...it's *unmerited*.

Until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end (vs. 17)...

Sanctuary...defines a *place of worship*. Here it's used as a *reference to the tabernacle* where the *Ark of the Covenant* rested. This is where God promised to *dwell* and to *meet* with *Moses* ([Exodus 25:22](#)). Today, the *sanctuary* is in *our heart*.

Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors! Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form (vs. 18-20)...

Asaph finally begins to *see* things from God's *perspective*. The *final destruction* of the **wicked** was sure. When they *least expected it*...they would be **destroyed**...suffering a *dreadful death* that leads to *everlasting punishment*.

V. THE DYNAMIC PRAISE: (vs. 21-28)

The **Psalmist** confessed that his *perspective* had been dulled by *insensitive ignorance*. If he hadn't been so *ignorant*...his heart wouldn't have become *bitter*.

But he was able to *come to his senses* and realize his own *glorious destiny*. His *true position* was in *stark contrast* with the *wicked*.

Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form. When my heart was embittered and I was pierced within, then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before You. Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand (vs. 21-23)...

He acknowledged that God was *always with him* (His *omnipresence*...**Immanuel**) and that He would *always guide him* with *wisdom* and *receive him into His glory*.

With Your counsel You will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory (vs. 24)...

Counsel...Heb. *naha*, means to *lead* or to *direct someone down the right path*. It describes the Lord *leading Israel* while they were in the *wilderness*.

“The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.”

~Exodus 13:21

Receive me to glory...means that *God will be glorified through him and his obedience*...and he will *walk in that glory*.

Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever (vs. 25-26)...

Paul was a great example of *living the victorious Christian life*...keeping his *focus* on the *eternal* instead of the *temporal*...regardless of the *circumstance* surrounding him. In **Philippians 3**, he counted his *impeccable pedigree* as *rubbish (vs. 8)*...even though he could have boasted in the *rite of circumcision (vs. 5)*...in his *race (vs. 5)*...in his *religion (vs. 5)*...in his record of *persecuting the church (vs. 6)*...and in his *righteous life (vs. 6)*. Instead, he *viewed everything* in relation to the *surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus as his Lord*.

“If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.”

~Philippians 3:4b-7

But notice **Paul's eternal perspective**.

“More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in

Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

~Philippians 3:8-14

And then in the next chapter...he *exhorts* to others to turn *vertical*...

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”

~Philippians 4:8

For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You. But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works (vs. 27-28)...

Perish...Heb. *abad*, means *to die* or *to undergo destruction*. It refers to *eternal destruction...not complete annihilation*, but an *unending, eternal destruction* of the wicked that will *never cease*.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- In a world that doesn't seem to be FAIR...where the wicked seem to prosper more than the righteous...the believer's eyes must be FIXED on God and His righteousness and goodness.
 - When we envy, we have a HORIZONTAL and TEMPERAL view of life. It's impossible for a person to *see* and *trust* in the *eternal* while *focused* on the *temporal*.
 - Envy results in a ROOT OF BITTERNESS being developed and growing in one's heart.
“See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled...”
- ~Hebrews 12:15
- We must always maintain an ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE in every situation we face in this *earthly life*. Seek to see things from *God's point of view*... from *heaven's perspective*.