

**Grief That Goes Somewhere
The Psalms of Lament**

Psalms 73-74: Why Do Good Things Happen to Bad People?

I. Introduction

II. Psalm 73 – The Question Asked from a Personal Perspective

A. A Psalm of Asaph (1 Chron 25:1)

B. Personal Reflections

C. An Overview of the Psalm

vv. 1-3 – The Temptation to Envy

Surely God is good to Israel,
To those who are pure in heart!
²But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling,
My steps had almost slipped.
³For I was envious of the arrogant
As I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

vv. 4-12 – The (Apparent) Success of the Wicked

⁴For there are no pains in their death,
And their body is fat.
⁵They are not in trouble *as other* men,
Nor are they plagued like mankind.
⁶Therefore pride is their necklace;
The garment of violence covers them.
⁷Their eye bulges from fatness;
The imaginations of *their* heart run riot.
⁸They mock and wickedly speak of oppression;
They speak from on high.
⁹They have set their mouth against the heavens,
And their tongue parades through the earth.
¹⁰Therefore his people return to this place,
And waters of abundance are drunk by them.
¹¹They say, “How does God know?
And is there knowledge with the Most High?”
¹²Behold, these are the wicked;
And always at ease, they have increased *in* wealth.

vv. 13-17 – Moving from the Problem to Resolution

13 Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure
And washed my hands in innocence;
14 For I have been stricken all day long
And chastened every morning.
15 If I had said, “I will speak thus,”
Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children.
16 When I pondered to understand this,
It was troublesome in my sight
17 Until I came into the sanctuary of God;
Then I perceived their end.

vv. 18-20 – The Reality of Destiny of the Wicked

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

vv. 21-28 – The Reality of the Destiny of the Psalmist

21 When my heart was embittered
And I was pierced within,
22 Then I was senseless and ignorant;
I was *like* a beast before You.
23 Nevertheless I am continually with You;
You have taken hold of my right hand.
24 With Your counsel You will guide me,
And afterward receive me to glory.
25 Whom have I in heaven *but You*?
And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.
26 My flesh and my heart may fail,
But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
27 For, behold, those who are far from You will perish;
You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You.
28 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.

D. Lessons Learned

III. Psalm 74 – The Question Asked from a Community Perspective

- A. A Maskil (Instruction) of Asaph
- B. Community Reflections
- C. An Overview of the Psalm

vv. 1-3 – Questions and Pleas

- ¹ O God, why have you rejected us forever?
Why does your anger smolder against the sheep of your pasture?
- ² Remember the nation you purchased long ago,
the people of your inheritance, whom you redeemed—
Mount Zion, where you dwelt.
- ³ Turn your steps toward these everlasting ruins,
all this destruction the enemy has brought on the sanctuary.

vv. 4-9 – Protests

- ⁴ Your foes roared in the place where you met with us;
they set up their standards as signs.
- ⁵ They behaved like men wielding axes
to cut through a thicket of trees.
- ⁶ They smashed all the carved paneling
with their axes and hatchets.
- ⁷ They burned your sanctuary to the ground;
they defiled the dwelling place of your Name.
- ⁸ They said in their hearts, “We will crush them completely!”
They burned every place where God was worshiped in the land.
- ⁹ We are given no signs from God;
no prophets are left,
and none of us knows how long this will be.

vv. 10-11 – More Questions

- ¹⁰ How long will the enemy mock you, God?
Will the foe revile your name forever?
- ¹¹ Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand?
Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them!

vv. 12-17 – Moving from the Problem to Resolution: Recalling God’s Past Faithfulness

- ¹² But God is my King from long ago;
he brings salvation on the earth.
- ¹³ It was you who split open the sea by your power;
you broke the heads of the monster in the waters.
- ¹⁴ It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan

- and gave it as food to the creatures of the desert.
¹⁵ It was you who opened up springs and streams;
you dried up the ever-flowing rivers.
¹⁶ The day is yours, and yours also the night;
you established the sun and moon.
¹⁷ It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth;
you made both summer and winter.

vv. 18-23 – Final Pleas

- ¹⁸ Remember how the enemy has mocked you, Lord,
how foolish people have reviled your name.
¹⁹ Do not hand over the life of your dove to wild beasts;
do not forget the lives of your afflicted people forever.
²⁰ Have regard for your covenant,
because haunts of violence fill the dark places of the land.
²¹ Do not let the oppressed retreat in disgrace;
may the poor and needy praise your name.
²² Rise up, O God, and defend your cause;
remember how fools mock you all day long.
²³ Do not ignore the clamor of your adversaries,
the uproar of your enemies, which rises continually.

D. Lessons Learned

VI. Going Forward

Remember Our Future Destiny! (Psalm 73)

Remember God's Past Faithfulness! (Psalm 74)

Sources:

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