

Bible Studies

Psalm 73

Read Psalm 73

Asaph (one of David's choir masters, 2 Chr 5:12) is going to deal with some controversial issues in this Psalm. In case we are tempted to doubt his faith, he starts by affirming his trust in God.

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. Psalm 73v1

What is the subject of this Psalm?

If you had to give it a title what would it be?

Bear in mind that the psalms are to do with worship, (some are prayers).

Now what would you say the subject of this Psalm is?

So then, this Psalm is about the wicked and how God could possibly permit them prosper. But more than that, it is about the psalmist personal struggle with envy and injustice and how he overcame them.



Asaph

Read Psalm 73v2-3

What effect did observing the wicked have on Asaph?

What did almost slip from?

What sin did he commit?

What is likely to happen to you if you envy others wealth?

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Hebrew 13:5

But godliness with contentment is great gain. 1 Timothy 6:6



The Wicked

Read Psalm 73v4-12

According to the psalmist what are the wicked like?

They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. Psalms 73:5

What is the inconsistency in this verse?

Do you think Asaph had a realistic view of the wicked?

Asaph only saw what he wanted to see. Free from the burdens common to man?

The burdens common to man are just that! We all have them.

Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy. Proverbs 14:10

Asaph's grass really was greener on the other side of the fence.

We have a habit of seeing only the problems in our own lives and the blessings in everyone else's.

What is the result of this?

What is the solution to this? 1 Thes 5:18

Count your blessings. Do not dwell on your grief.

Asaph had a view of life that the righteous would be blessed and the wicked would come to grief. In his own life he could see the opposite. It was this that led to his crisis of faith.

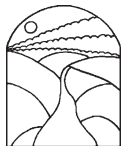
Was his view of life realistic?

Jeremiah experienced this same difficulty:

You are always righteous, O LORD, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?

You have planted them, and they have taken root; they grow and bear fruit. You are always on their lips but far from their hearts. Jeremiah 12:1-2

There are many passages that talk about God's blessing for the righteous and His judgement on the wicked. But there are also many that point out that this is not always the case. Asaph's understanding of prosperity was way too simple. He let something to be a problem to his faith, which the Bible accepts as normal.



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Do we ever do this?

An example would be suffering, or natural disasters. If the Bible predicts these things; how can they then be used as objections to the Bible. 1 Peter 3:17, Matthew 24:7.

Your Father in heaven... causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Matthew 5:45

What does this verse mean?

Do you think God's ability to bless the wicked is a fault in God?

If only you would slay the wicked, O God! Psalm 139:19

Why doesn't He? 2 Peter 3v9



Back to Asaph Read Psalm 73v13-16

What did Asaph hope to achieve by keeping himself pure?

Was this the right reason?

What is the right reason?

We need to remember that Asaph is writing this in hind sight, he had already understood the solution before he started to write the Psalm.

If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed your children. Psalms 73:15

What does this mean?

When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me Psalms 73:16

Of what concern is it to you if the wicked do prosper?

If you get hung up on this, what effect will it have on you?

Asaph is aware that he has got himself into an unproductive train of thought. If he indulges it, instead of just getting on with walk of faith, he is going to fall. He will let himself down and those relying on him. His faith and his doubt will effect others, not just himself.



The penny drops Read Psalm 73v16-28

When did things change for him? v17

He got distracted by the reality of God! He enters into God's presence and suddenly this problem, which had seemed so big, becomes totally unimportant.

What will the future be for the wicked? v18-20

In the end they will be destroyed, but the imagery is all future, now they are on slippery ground, if they do not repent, judgement day will see them cast down.

Verse 21-22 It is not until realises this, that he sees the depth of the effect it had on him. It had robbed him of his reason and made him bitter. It had stopped him from seeing things as they are and from communion with God.

What was Asaph's basic problem?

You could answer this a lot of ways, but I would say *he was looking in the wrong place*. He needed to look to God, instead he looked at the wicked.

What does Asaph decide is important? v23-28

Compared with this what is all the prosperity of the wicked?

Who has the better deal, the wicked or the righteous?

What does Asaph have, that the wicked do not?

All this obviously applies to us, so often we set our hearts on the wrong things and we look in the wrong places, we get discouraged and it brings us down spiritually.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, Hebrews 12:2

Can you really say I desire nothing besides you?

What do you have as a Christian that is important?

The solution; forget the wicked and all the lust for the worlds goals, wealth, fame, power. Make God your refuge.

Read Psalm 37