

“ASAPH”

Text: Psalm 73:1-28
Subject: How To Overcome Envy’s Temptation

Introduction

1. Asaph was a member of the tribe of Levi.
2. Asaph was put in charge of the worship music (by David) that was performed at the Tent of Meeting before Solomon built the great temple in Jerusalem. (I Chronicles 6:39)
3. Asaph was also a priest who was responsible for the celebration that was to accompany the returning of the Ark. (I Chronicles 15:13-19)
4. Asaph wrote at least 12 of the 150 Psalms. (50, 73-83)
5. Asaph was a man of intense worship and expressive feeling.

(But There Was Just One Problem)

- ◆ Asaph was angry as he compared himself to the ungodly around him.
- ◆ Asaph thought his neighbors were prospering in their wickedness.
- ◆ Asaph felt like God wasn’t fair in His dealings.
- ◆ Asaph needed victory to overcome his envy of the wicked:

“I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked” (Psalm 73:1)

Question: What does Asaph see that changes him for the better?

Question: What must we see that will protect us from ever “feeling cheated” or thinking that God is “unfair”?

I. Asaph Sees Beside Himself (Vs. 1-12)

“My feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped” (v. 2)

Question: Why was Asaph losing confidence in God?

Question: Why was Asaph slipping in his faith?

Question: Why was Asaph in need of this revelation?

Answer: Because Asaph was looking around at everybody else, and what he saw was confusing to him.

#1. Asaph Was Upset At Their “Prosperity” (Vs. 3-5)

- ◆ “I saw their prosperity” (v. 3) or, they seem to be blessed of God! —
- ◆ “No bands in their death, their strength is firm” (v. 4) or, they die happy with full strength and do not seem to suffer.
- ◆ “They are not in trouble as other men” (v. 5) or, they seem to be exempt from the afflictions of the righteous.

#2. Asaph Was Upset At Their “Pride” (Vs. 6-9)

- ◆ “Pride surrounds them like a chain” (v. 6)
(Chains of gold and gold rings were signs of civil power and powerful offices).
(The proud were wearing pride on their faces like the chains around their necks).
(Arrogance, conceit and a proud look).
- ◆ “They have more than heart could wish” (v. 7)
- ◆ “Their eyes stand out with fatness” (v. 7) or,

- (They wouldn't even give God the credit for all they had).
- ◆ “They speak loftily” (v. 8) or,
(They are so proud that they speak down and against those who serve God).
 - ◆ “They set their mouth against the heavens” (v. 9) or,
(They feel so superior to all who live “other worldly” and for “eternity”).

#3. Asaph Was Upset At Their “Popularity”

“Therefore his people return hither; and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them” (v. 10)

Fact: “Waters of a full cup” mean that people drink it all in and beg for more.

- “And they say, how doth God know?” (v. 11) or,
- ◆ They even say, “Does God know who I am and what I’ve got?”
 - ◆ They think to themselves, “I’m increased with goods without any help from God”.

**“Behold, These Are The Ungodly, Who Prosper In The World;
They Increase In Riches”. (V. 12)**

II. Asaph Sees Inside Himself (Vs. 13-15)

“Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain” (v. 13)

“I’ve washed my hands in innocency” (v. 13)

“All day long I’ve been plagued” (v. 14)

“I’m chastened every morning” (v. 14)

Fact: Asaph is yielding to temptation:

- ◆ He feels there is no advantage to living a pure and holy life.
- ◆ He believes his righteous living is in vain.
- ◆ He thinks his discipline is not paying off.
- ◆ He keeps all of his feelings to himself.

“If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children” (v. 15)

Asaph Is In Pain

“When I thought to know this, it was to painful for me” (v. 16)

(In Other Words)

- ◆ Asaph feels that God is not being fair!
- ◆ Asaph feels that God is overlooking some things!
- ◆ Asaph feels that God is unaware of what’s happening!

(So Asaph Makes A Great Decision)

III. Asaph Sees Above Himself (Vs. 16-22)

“I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end” (v. 17)

Fact: Asaph went to church to worship God.

Fact: Asaph went to God for some answers.

Fact: Asaph went to the source where all truth dwells.

(What Did God Reveal About The Wicked?)

#1. They stand in slippery places (v. 18)

- ◆ They have no sure foundation or footing.

- ◆ They have no anchor to hold to.
- #2. They are headed for destruction (v. 18)
 - ◆ Their end is in view to God.
 - ◆ Their end is now in view to Asaph.
- #3. They are prosperous but only temporarily (v. 19)
 - ◆ In a moment they can lose it all.
 - ◆ In an instant they are consumed with terror.
- #4. They are living only a dream (v. 20)
 - ◆ Their life is only an image (no reality to it).
 - ◆ Their life is only glamour and glitter. (Hollywood)
 - ◆ Their life is only a mirage (no substance).
 - ◆ Their life is only a bubble waiting to burst.

Asaph's Awareness Must Become Our Awareness:

- #1. Asaph's turning point came when (in the sanctuary) he saw the judgment upon sin.
 - ◆ The death of the sacrificial animals symbolized death as the end result of sin.
- #2. Asaph got a glimpse of the fiery judgment awaiting lost people when he saw the fire in the temple.
- #3. Asaph sees life from God's perspective and overcomes his own limited worldview.

"...then understood I their end" (v. 17)

Question: What happens inside of you when you see the coming judgment awaiting the wicked (who may be prosperous right now?)

Answer: (V. 17) Truth overcomes every envious thought and leaves you content (enabling you to enjoy your days).

Oh Beloved

- ◆ It is God's will that you enjoy your days upon earth:

"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it". (Psalm 118:24)

- ◆ It is God's will that you live content:

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11)

- ◆ It is God's will that you not worry:

"Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34)

- ◆ It is God's will that you not compare:

"We dare not compare ourselves with those who commend themselves, for if we do we are not wise" (II Corinthians 10:12)

Conclusion

Question: What happens when Asaph goes into the sanctuary and sees the Lord?

Answer: He realizes that God is right and he is wrong: "So foolish was I, and ignorant" (v. 22)
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Question: What happens next after Asaph humbles himself?

Answer: He realizes what he really has (even though he doesn't have material prosperity and a trouble free life).

#1. He has the presence of the Lord:

"I am continually with thee, thou hast holden me by my right hand" (v. 23)

#2. He has the guidance of the Lord:

"Thou shalt guide me with counsel" (v. 24)

#3. He has a future with the Lord:

"...and afterward receive me to glory" (v. 24)

#4. He has a single-minded eye:

"There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (v. 25)

#5. He has the strength of the Lord:

"God is the strength of my heart" (v. 26)

#6. He has spiritual understanding as to the wicked:

"Lo, they that are far from thee shall perish" (v. 27)

#7. He has fellowship with the Lord:

"It is good for me to draw near to God, I have put my trust in the Lord" (v. 28)

Life Application
(Truth To Live By From Psalm 73)

#1. All prosperity on earth is temporal at best.

#2. True prosperity is not what we accumulate down here (but what we send ahead for eternity)

#3. All prosperity of the wicked is not real prosperity after all.

#4. The more we keep our eyes on Jesus, the less we'll be bothered by what we see around us.

#5. God is enough to make us content and spare us from the snare and lie of envy.

AMEN!
Bill Kirk, Pastor

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