

PSALM 73 vs 1

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This is the 2nd of 12 Psalms ascribed to Asaph -- his first being Psalm 50; and this is the first of 11 consecutive psalms bearing this seer's name. In 2 Chronicles 29, Hezekiah ordered the Levites "to sing the words of David and of Asaph the seer" ... evidence the Spirit of God continues inspiring others to consider the ways of the Lord.

Divisions: Curiously, this 73rd Psalm corresponds in subject with the 37th. The Psalmist declares his confidence in God; then states his temptation (2-14) then he is embarrassed as to how to act (15-17); finding deliverance, he describes the fate of the ungodly (18-20); condemns his own folly (21-24) and concludes renewing his allegiance to his God.-- Charles Spurgeon.



A Psalm of Asaph,

¹ Only God is good to Israel, to those with a clean heart.

² But as for me, I almost stumbled; my steps nearly slipped.

³ For I was envious at the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wrongdoer / in Hebrew, the word for foolish is: **halal...** which means **to boast**, to brag. At its root is our word: **hallelujah...** which is a proper word of praise. But obviously the Hebrew language recognizes the close relationship of praise to fools. Who hasn't seen the Hollywood appearances with cameras filming and politicians waving... while someone stands off camera prompting cheers from the crowds they loathe?

Before Asaph spent time re-thinking the apparent conflict, he was already envious. Envy was the problem Pontius Pilate observed in the religious leaders when they feverishly yelled to crucify Jesus, the Messiah.

Who would envy someone going up a high ladder, and being mounted above the rest of the people, when it is only for a little while, in order to be hanged? It would be a brutish thing to envy an ox and his high and sweet pasture, when he is only fitted for the day of slaughter.

These external ornaments of health, wealth, pleasures, and preferments, which endow wicked men, cannot... change their natures for the better. Whatever appearance these things make in the eyes of the world, they are like a noisome dunghill covered with scarlet.-- John Willison, 1680-1750

Socrates, when asked what would be vexatious to good men, replied, "The prosperity of the bad." And what would vex the bad? "The prosperity of the good."

⁴ For they have no pains to their death: and they are well fed.

⁵ They are not in trouble as other people; nor are they plagued like other men.

⁶ Therefore pride is their necklace; and like a garment, violence covers them.

⁷ Their eyes bulge with abundance: they have more than heart could wish.

⁸ They scoff, and speak maliciously; they arrogantly threaten oppression.

fat and happy folk... they seem to have no knotted restraints, ties or fetters, carefree in life and death; being chained to nothing. Even Julius Caesar, on the day before he was slain declared that it seemed to him to be a happy death to die suddenly and unexpectedly. The faithless fools, they are rotten... and without effort to conceal their intentions; they plot against those who they can fraudulently injure: deceitfully acquire; and cruelly extort; they speak from their sense of superiority, yet they are fools...

⁹ They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue parades through the earth.

¹⁰ So his people turn to them: and are drunk on their overflowing words.

¹¹ And they say, How does God know? and does the Most High really know?

¹² Indeed, they are senseless fools, who are always at ease; who increase in riches.

¹³ Only in vain I have cleansed my heart, and washed my hands in innocence.

¹⁴ For all day long I have been plagued, and corrected every morning.

Think about it: There is a beauty in the name appropriated by the Saxon nations to the Deity, unequalled except by His most respectful Hebrew appellation. They called him "GOD" which is literally The GOOD. The same word signifying the Deity, and His most endearing quality – Charles Spurgeon. Only God is good to **the one He governs**; while the rain falls on the just and unjust alike. Asaph is having a difficult time identifying with what he confidently knows is true about almighty God; this one is unsteady, and tottering. Should I stay? Should I go? Should I run and hide? Should I enter the light? I almost slipped; I nearly lost my footing. And why this wavering faith and unsure footing? What caused this perplexing conflict?

¹⁵ If I say, I will speak these things; behold, I would betray the generation of Your children.

¹⁶ When I tried to understand this, it was too troublesome for me;

¹⁷ until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end.

Think about it: They wonder, though God knows everything, is it true He sees these things happening? And that He calmly looks on? Can there be in God a knowledge of these facts? If I utter all that is passing in my mind and heart; I will cause injury to some of God's own children; in other words, some things are best left unsaid; or as the old hymn said: take it to the Lord in prayer. "until I went into the sanctuary of God." Here, Dr. Dallas Willard said, each of the psalms have this turning point; and understanding. Look for it. "then I understood their end" ... the last days, **the 3 days still on the Lord's calendar**

¹⁸ Surely in slippery places You set them: You threw them down to destruction.

¹⁹ O how they are destroyed, in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terror.

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20 Like waking from a dream; O Lord, when they awake, You despise their faulty image.

Think about it: this word is: **tselem**, first used in Genesis when God says, **Let Us make man in Our image**. God our Father is creating adopted children who look like Him; who love Him and freely love one another. Some prefer to create their own image; which will not be fit for eternity. To slip and slide into ruin, in the blink of an eye! with an alarming calamity; a dreadful event; their prosperity is like the visions of a dream; **what is real is known when one awakes**; reality will be seen when we awaken in His likeness – Barnes Notes;

21 Thus my heart was embittered, and my mind was pierced.

22 How stupid and ignorant I was: like a dumb cow before You.

23 Yet, I am always with You. You seized me by my right hand.

24 You guided me with Your counsel; and afterward receive me to glory.

Think about it: In the presence of my Maker, I was no better than a stupid animal -- any beast, a dumb cow, an ornery goat, a chicken with my head cut off; thankfully he does not give up his faith, though he confesses his folly; like a good Shepherd You didn't let me slip away! when all your work is done; when all your doubts and fears are over; and when all your battles are fought, then, you will receive your reward. **No eye has seen, no ear has heard; neither has it entered into the heart of man... all that God has prepared for those who love Him!** – Isaiah 64

25 Whom have I in heaven? beside You, there is nothing on earth I desire.

26 My body and soul may fail: but God is the Rock of my heart, and my portion forever.

27 Indeed, those who leave You vanish: You destroy all who go from You whoring.

28 For me, the nearer to God is my good; the Lord GOD is my shelter, that I may tell all Your works / after seeing so many wander off from God: Asaph uses 4 Hebrew words which is what he said at the beginning of this psalm: **God is good.**

Think about it: "Whom have I in heaven?" / **but you** those two words were added by the translator, and I think being helpful, they missed the point. The question is perfectly clear! The Lord God wants each of us to answer it. Sadly, some will say: there is nobody there. Others will dispute their claims. We will say what the Lord Jesus said, Our Father in heaven... He's never stopped working! He's concerned about each of us; He wants us to make it all the way home someday. He's still making some in His image.

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