

PSALMS

Songs from the Heart

Psalm 73

OVERVIEW OF PSALMS

- The word Psalms is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *mizmor*. It signifies “music accompanied by stringed instruments.”
- The word *mizmor* is found 57 times in Psalms, so the translators used it to describe the whole book.
- Cymbals, timbrels, wind instruments, and stringed instruments are all named in the Psalms.
- There were Levites who were professional ministers and musicians for worship at the tabernacle and later the temple. There must have been large Jewish orchestras and large families of God-ordained musicians and singers constantly preparing, practicing, and then leading worshipers in the Psalms.

PARALLELISM IN HEBREW POETRY

- **SYNONYMOUS PARALLELISM** - a line of thought is immediately followed by another line of similar thought that expresses the same thought in a different way. A good example is Psalm 71:5-6.
- **ANTITHETICAL PARALLELISM** - a line of thought is immediately followed by another line of opposite thought or contrasting insight. A good example is Psalm 71:13-14.

THE SEVEN TYPES OF PSALMS

- The Psalms have seven types or categories. There is the **hymn**, the **lament**, the **thanksgiving psalm**, the **psalm of remembrance**, the **psalm of confidence**, the **wisdom psalm** and the **kingship psalm**.
- The hymn psalm takes us to the height of our experience in the Lord. The lament psalm takes us to the depth of our experience. These can be known as the mountain tops and the valleys of faith.
- The Psalms show us that we can control our emotions, and they help us process and focus them properly. We should never repress our emotions, but to release them rightly to God and invite Him in.

- God will turn your doubts into trust, fears into faith, sorrow into joy, and hate into love if you let Him.
- The Psalms always lead from a negative to a positive. They always end in faith, hope, or praise.
- The lament psalms have a similar structure. Not all of these will be in every lament psalm.
 1. Invocation
 2. Cry for help
 3. Complaints
 4. Confession of sin or assertion of being innocent
 5. Curse of enemies
 6. Confidence of faith in God's response
 7. Hymn or blessing

THE DANGER OF ENVY (73:1-3)

- Psalm 73 is written by Asaph who was the chief Levite mentioned in 1 Chronicles 16:4.

1 CHRONICLES 16:4-7 (ESV) ⁴Then he appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the LORD, to invoke, to thank, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel. ⁵Asaph was the chief, and second to him were Zechariah, Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom, and Jeiel, who were to play harps and lyres; Asaph was to sound the cymbals, ⁶and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests were to blow trumpets regularly before the ark of the covenant of God. ⁷Then on that day David first appointed that thanksgiving be sung to the LORD by Asaph and his brothers.

- (vs1) Asaph is saying "Surely, God is good and therefore will be faithful to the faithful."
- God is more than that. God is faithful even to the faithless as He reveals Himself through time.
- (vs2) He almost stopped believing. He almost back slid in his faith. He's saying "I believe, yet I almost stopped believing." What caused this struggle?
- (vs3) The crux of Asaph's struggle is found in this verse. His offence was simple. Why should the people who oppose God be better off than those who follow and trust in Him?

THE PROSPERITY AND STRENGTH OF THE WICKED? (73:4-12)

- (vs4) There is no pain in their death. They don't weaken, there is only strength. I don't see justice given out even on their bodies.

- (vs5) They don't struggle in life; they don't have the common worries and issues that weigh the rest of the world down.
- (vs6) Because there is no judgment from God, they are emboldened in pride and are unhindered to hurt others that stand in their path. They overpower the weak because they can.
- (vs7) Their eyes desire everything in their path. They want it all.
- The fatness of their eyes, speaks to those who have been drinking all night and partying, whose eyes in the morning are puffy and show the signs of overindulgence.
- (vs8) Those that should be judged for their evil speak judgmentally against their neighbors. Those that are liars and wicked sit in the seats meant for those that would speak in truth and righteousness.
- (vs9) They brag to everyone both strong and weak how they are invulnerable and unstoppable. "Who's going to stop me? You?" This person is a bully.
- (vs10) People who are impressed with his boasting are impressed by him. They both pay respect and submit to him.
- (vs11) They even unify in their arrogance and disdain against God Himself. We can do whatever we want and God will do nothing about it. God surely doesn't involve Himself in the ways of men.
- It's as if they're deist's who believe that a god created the world and watches it at a distance.
- (vs12) They have no fear, no sufferings, no accountability, therefore they are living the easy life and continue to grow richer and more powerful.

THE CONSTANT PAIN OF THE PSALMIST (73:13-15)

- (vs13) Surely, living a clean and righteous life does not result in having the strength, favor, and blessings of God. It's been a waste of time. Look at the outcome and the fruit of my life.
- Asaph was a professional minister. He was the leader of worship in the temple. Surely, someone in his position would receive special favor or merit above the ungodly. But, it doesn't seem so.
- (vs14) What have I gotten out of living a holy life? I suffer inwardly and outwardly every day,
- (vs15) If I had shared my doubts and struggles of faith with other people, I would have hurt or destroyed many others faith in you Lord. I'm glad I didn't. It would've been wrong.

THE PEACE AND PERSPECTIVE FOUND IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD (73:16-17)

- (vs16) On his own, Asaph couldn't process these questions, or come to a rightful answer or solution. On his own, he only found more pain and disillusionment... on his own!
- (vs17) "Until I entered the sanctuary of God." The Psalmist had no hope, until he entered into God's presence. It was in God's presence and glory, where he found perspective and peace.
- The Hebrew word for *sanctuary* is plural in its root form. It means "sanctuaries." It could be translated, "until I entered into the sanctuaries of God," meaning His presence, holy revelations, holy mysteries, or divine eternal perspective.
- When Asaph saw his problem and plight through God's eyes and in light of eternity, he received the just answer that was needed.

THE DESTINY OF THE WICKED (73:18-20)

- (vs18-19) God will cast evil doers and sinners into an eternal torment. The Hebrew word for *ruin* means "the exactions or demanding of an unpaid debt."
- There is an eternal pay day for those that sin, scoff, and refuse to repent before the living God.

ROMANS 12:17-19 (NIV) ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

- (vs20) Like when one wakes up from a dream and faces reality. The evil doers fantasies will be wrecked on the day of reality facing God's judgment.

THE CONFESSION OF ASAPH (73:21-22)

- (vs21-22) When Asaph was in deep pain and lost sense of God and a righteous perspective, he let his heart and bitterness rage wrongfully against God.
- When he said "I was a brute beast before you," he was saying "I was as dumb and ignorant as a raging animal." Asaph realizes his ignorance was his almost downfall. If he hadn't been ignorant, he wouldn't have fell into disillusionment and almost sure destruction.

THE DESTINY OF THE RIGHTEOUS (73:23-28)

- (vs24) Asaph goes from worries of immediate problems to lasting perfection. There is a shift in his mind and heart that no longer is focused on the temporal and fleeting, but to his eternal and lasting promise of glory.

POWER VERSES: (73:25-26) “WHOM HAVE I IN HEAVEN BUT YOU? AND EARTH HAS NOTHING I DESIRE BESIDES YOU. MY FLESH AND MY HEART MAY FAIL, BUT GOD IS THE STRENGTH OF MY HEART AND MY PORTION FOREVER.”

- The writer who is being led by the Spirit writing this song sees God’s qualities to such heightened levels that he declares you are so great if I had to describe it in heights, “you reach the heavens!”
- (vs26) The Hebrew word for *rock* used here is also a synonym that the Jewish people have used for referencing God. It could be translated “God is the God of my heart”
- Asaph is declaring to God “You are the center and the most important thing in my life. You are my all in all. You are life itself.
- Why did Asaph say to God “You are my portion?” Because, they lived in a polytheistic world where many gentile nations would proclaim a certain god as theirs, or their portion. In other words, we choose to serve this god over that god. Asaph is saying, “God you are my God forever. There is no other god than You.”
- (vs27-28) These verses carry a connotation of committing spiritual adultery. Asaph is saying, “Other Jewish believers may be unfaithful and cheat on you by serving other gods, but I will remain faithful to you and you alone.” Your justice will be done for those who do not return or remain faithful.
- (vs28) This is translation does not capture the fullness of the text. The Hebrew suggests an action not just a statement. Asaph is saying, “it is good for me to draw near to God!” Now that he has seen a deeper level of God’s goodness and justice, he wants even more of God.
- To be satisfied in the Lord, is to be enlarged. To be quenched is to increase thirst. To be full is to want even more. The more we have of God, the more He expands our capacity to go deeper and wider in our knowledge and experience.
- The hungrier you come the fuller you will be!
- Even though there is still an enemy around him, he will find *refuge*, “shelter from danger,” in the Lord.
- Asaph has come to a point of faith, that God will take care of his enemy and keep him safe.
- In Asaph’s final words, he declares his future mission. I want to inspire and bring others closer to God. I want them to experience His divine presence, power, and perspective. I want them in eternal glory.

Psalm 73

NIV

- ¹ Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.
- ² But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold.
- ³ For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
- ⁴ They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong.
- ⁵ They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills.
- ⁶ Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence.
- ⁷ From their callous hearts comes iniquity; their evil imaginations have no limits.
- ⁸ They scoff, and speak with malice; with arrogance they threaten oppression.
- ⁹ Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth.
- ¹⁰ Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance.
- ¹¹ They say, "How would God know? Does the Most High know anything?"
- ¹² This is what the wicked are like— always free of care, they go on amassing wealth.
- ¹³ Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence.
- ¹⁴ All day long I have been afflicted, and every morning brings new punishments.
- ¹⁵ If I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed your children.
- ¹⁶ When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply
- ¹⁷ till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.
- ¹⁸ Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin.
- ¹⁹ How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors!
- ²⁰ They are like a dream when one awakes; when you arise, Lord,
you will despise them as fantasies.
- ²¹ When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered,
- ²² I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.
- ²³ Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand.
- ²⁴ You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.
- ²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
- ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.
- ²⁷ Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.
- ²⁸ But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge;
I will tell of all your deeds.