

The Elusive Presence of God in Times of Evil Psalm 73

Introduction

There are many situations that challenge our spiritual life and spiritual formation. One of them that I find difficult is when people who are not believers seem to be living a life of total pleasure while we the faithful battle difficulties. This is not a new phenomenon. This reality has been in existence from the beginning of mankind. In the OT the book of Psalms is written with a significant sense of reality. Difficult topics are not skirted or ignored. They are dealt with head-on so that the people of God can have confidence with their trust in and their worship of our great and glorious God.

Personal Introduction

Style of Psalm

There are parts of this psalm that allow it to be categorized as a Wisdom Psalm, A Lament, or a Psalm of Thanksgiving.

Situation of the Psalm - Unclear but similar to themes of Psalm 37 and of Job

Speaker/Author of the Psalm - Asaph a Musician (Ezra 2:41; I Chron. 15:19, 16:5) Ps. 50,73-83 are attributed to him.

Specific Time of the Psalm - Pre exile (970) since the Sol. Temple/Sanctuary was standing :17

Structure of the Psalm

- I. Confession of Doubt because of the Wicked 73:1-16
- II. Confidence in God because of His Promise. 73:17-28

This is a psalm of a Jewish OT worshiper reflecting on his theology of God and the world. We will make a correspondence to the faithful Christian as he relates to the triune Godhead as described in the NT.

The Problem :1-16 & The Solution :17-28

I. The Danger of Focusing on Unbelievers' Comfortable Circumstances; It can be Overwhelming. :1-16

A. The Reality - God is Good but We Sometimes Doubt His Goodness :1-3

1. The reality :1
2. The result :2
3. The reason:3

God is good to the faithful but sometimes my experience causes me to wonder. What are you doing Lord? Why this...Why them...Why now??

Fact - People of the world can be arrogant and prosperous...Are you envious?
(Do not be envious. Psalm 37:1)

- B. The Reason - Doubt in God Comes from Focusing on the Present Temporal Circumstances of the Unbeliever :4-12
1. They are Free from Troubles :4-5
Long lives - no trouble in life
Fat - (Flourishing) no trouble, no plagues - illness or disease (Money can buy healthcare)
 2. They are Proudful :6
Pride, Haughty, Rise up - powerful waves. Wear it to display like a necklace - show off (Joseph – Gen. 41:42- and Daniel – Dan. 5:29 - had chains of honor)
Violence – Garment - social injustice - abuse people through government
 3. They have everything :7
 4. They Speak to the World with Arrogance :8-10
 5. They are Insolent and Impertinent before God :11
 6. They Trust in Their Pomp and Wealth. :12 (See Psalm 49:6)

(Yesterday and Today-The Aristocracy of England and the Ruling Class of New England)

- C. The Result - When Believers Envy Unbelievers it will Result in Questioning their Commitment to the Lord. :13-14
We might erroneously conclude that following the Lord has been a waste of our life.
My Hands and Heart I have devoted to you - External and Internal - ALL OF ME.
We might erroneously conclude we are being punished since we are not experiencing what the wicked are experiencing (Job’s friends had this view of Job!)
- D. The Rebuke - Believers Must be Careful How they Express their Frustrations and Feelings :15-16
1. The writer uses a conditional clause. “If I had said....”
He is careful how and what he speaks so as not to injure the children :15
(The generation of your sons)
We need to be mindful of the weaker brother or immature Christians (Rom. 14:1ff)
 2. This creates additional turmoil to his faith as he senses that he is suffering alone. :16
“I see too much to doubt but too little to be sure. I am the most to be pitied” Pascal

Perspective Provides Poise in Our Spiritual Life

II. The Duty of the Believer is to Focus on the Difference of the Destiny of the Unbeliever and Believer. :17-28

- A. When we see God clearly, we understand His Perspective and His Big Picture :17-20
1. The sanctuary of God - Sanctuary-(Temple) is in Plural - some trans: Great Sanctuary
 2. Spiritual Perspective is gained from being with God: God alone is the true sovereign!

3. God's feeling and judgment toward the unbeliever is condemnation.

*What about Love? What about justice?

How do we today reconcile the Ethic of Love and the Law of Christ to those who are not believers? "Father forgive them for they know not what they are doing."

Dispensational issue, OT Theocracy issue. Who are these unbelievers? Inside or outside Israel?

B. Confidence in the future Glory of God Gives Us Confidence in Present Circumstances

1. Confession :21-22

It is foolish to envy the wicked. (Psalm 49:12-20)

2. Clarification :23-24

God holds us now & Our future is with the Lord of glory

3. Conclusion :25-26

God is the "Rock"- strength of my heart. (Psalm 18:2) & my Portion (Ps 16:5)

A Biblical and Theological Perspective of who and what God is gives us confidence.

(This is why we study "Theology proper" - The Godhead, Names, Nature and Attributes of the Triune LORD)

C. The End Game is the Only Game :27-28

1. Those who are far away and unfaithful will be destroyed :27

2. Those who are close find the Lord to be a refuge :28

- Do we Focus on God or on the Godless? (Celebrities, Power brokers of the world)
- Do we Fixate on the wealth and power of this world?
- Do we Find comfort in the sanctuary of the body of Christ? (People and Place)
- Do we Fathom that the promise of power and prosperity of this world falls short of the promise and provision of God in the world of the future?

I John 2:15-17-- Do not love the world or the things of the world...The world is passing away

Romans 12:2 -- Don't be conformed to this world...

Matt. 16:25-26; Lk 9:23 -- What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

"Every picture tells a story." Rod Stewart

Always remember the story behind the story.

There is a temporal story but there is also an Eternal story of Future Glory!

Live today in light of tomorrow---Right Now Counts Forever!