

## “The Nearness of God Is My Good”

### Psalm 73 A Psalm of Asaph

What do we do when our faith is shaken?

What do we do when the news is so bad that our hearts are in turmoil?

Today, using Psalm 73, I want to try and answer these questions.

First, let's take a look at the person who wrote it.

Listen to these verses. **I Chronicles 15:16** - "David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their brothers as the singers who should play loudly on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy." Asaph was a Levite, who was appointed as a singer and musician. Let's look at another verse.

**I Chron. 16:4** - "Then 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."

Asaph was the chief of those ministers. His job was to call on the name of the Lord, to confess sin before the Lord and to praise the Lord. However, here, Asaph is in turmoil. Let's read verse 1-3 again.

"Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

Asaph, leader of the praise of Israel, knows and believes that God is good, but he is stumbling in his faith and almost slipping. He sees those around him who are prospering even though they don't believe in God.

**Verse 5:** "They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind." Asaph thinks, "This isn't fair. They don't suffer. They are not struck with sickness. They are self-sufficient. They don't need God. That's the way it appears to him."

**Verse 11:** "And they say, 'How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?'"

It seems as if God doesn't even care. He doesn't even know. It seems that he doesn't have wisdom.

And that causes him to think that maybe this is all in vain. **Verse 13:** "All in vain I have kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence."

Asaph's heart was telling him, "Maybe this is all in vain. You don't have to do all this. Give up on it."

Recently, "deconversion" has become a popular term. When I became a Christian, I said I was converted. So to be de-converted means to not be a Christian anymore. I don't believe in God anymore. I used to be a Christian, but now I'm an atheist. People have basically said, "I give up on my faith." I don't really believe there is a God. I don't believe that the Bible is true."

In a lot of cases, "de-conversion" happened because people just got tired of trying to live a good Christian life. They got tired of trying to please their parents or the church leaders. On top of that, it doesn't seem like God is answering our prayers or that he even cares about us. Is he really there? Is this all really true?

What shall we do in this path of escalation?

What did Asaph do? First of all, he is confessing that he has these doubts. This is very important. We have a tendency not to say anything. "I'm going to figure this out by myself." But in verse 16, Asaph says, "But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task."

But then notice what he says next. Verse 17, "Until I went into the house of God; then I discerned their end."

He understands the end of those who are without God. Verse 19: "How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors." Their success is only a dream, a fantasy. Asaph says in verse 22: "I was like an animal. I was ignorant toward God."

Asaph realized that he, not God, was the one without wisdom. He gained a great awareness. In himself he had no wisdom. When he began to worship, he realized his own lack of wisdom.

But then, look at this. Verse **23,24**: "Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me into glory." God never let go of Asaph, even in his doubting. He was there. He guided him with his counsel. He received him into glory, into the presence of God.

**Verses 25 and 26**, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

Heaven is God. If God isn't there, it won't be heaven. We die. We become weak. Our strength declines. However, God never dies. He is the strength, the rock of our hearts. That means that he is the foundation of our hearts, that makes us unshakeable and stable and content.

The expression "my portion forever" comes from the fact that the Levites, of which Asaph was one, did not own any land, but they did receive a tithe from the other tribes that provided for their living. This means that Asaph would be provided for his whole life.

The last two verses, 27 and 28, "For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works."

Asaph saw the benefit of drawing near to God which he doubted before. He gained a passion to declare all of God's works. He would become a messenger of God's goodness and of the eternal perspective he gained in the house of the Lord.

Recently, we lost a precious friend. The grief is deep. Our hearts are in pain. But as I went to view his body and see Yuya one last time, I understood our end. Our lives here end, but because of God sending Jesus, our death is not the end. Yes, we grieve Yuya's death because we loved him so much. But we also realize that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Yuya believed that and if we believe that, we will see each other again.

If you doubt God, please go to Jesus. That is the sanctuary of God, where you will discover your end, God's wisdom, his loving existence, the strength of his heart and his provision for you. Let's go to Jesus and be saved.