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Psalm 73

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Psalm 73.

Topics.

- God is good, yet I almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped.
- Being envious of the prosperity of the wicked I almost stumbled.
- God's people turn back to the wicked, and find no fault in them.
- In vain I have kept my heart clean for I have been stricken.
- I did not understand, until I discerned the end of the wicked.
- I was ignorant, like a beast toward God, yet he will receive me to glory.
- Who have I in heaven, but God, there is nothing I desire besides him.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION

Psalms are songs and prayers offered to God by the nation Israel, they cover the range of human emotion, expressing praise, faith, victory, sorrow, despair, depression, frustration and the troubled heart of a mourner. They contrast the righteous with the wicked, and include the wisdom and the treasure of God's word. Psalms were written at the beginning of the 15th century BC and probably collected in their final form in the 3rd century.

1

BOOK THREE (PSALM 73-89)

PSALM 73:1-2

A Psalm of Asaph

God is Good, Yet I Almost Stumbled, My Steps had Nearly Slipped.

- **Psalm 73:1-2:** Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. ²But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped.

For me this is one of the most beautiful Psalms and so encouraging for every righteous person who love God and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. The following verses show that Asaph, the author of this Psalm (since there are others) was a Levite of the Gershonite family, appointed over the service of the praise in the time of David and Solomon.

- Asaph was the chief, and second to him were Zechariah, Jeiel, Shemira-moth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom, and Jeiel, who were to play harps and lyres; Asaph was to sound the cymbals. (1 Chron. 16:5).
- All the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, their sons and kinsmen, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the altar with 120 priests who were trumpeters. (2 Chron. 5:12).
- The singers: the sons of Asaph 148. (Neh. 7:44).

These verses show that Asaph was the chief, of those who played harps, lyres and trumpets and that he played the cymbals and his sons were singers. Asaph begins the Psalm proclaiming that God is good to the

faithful, which of course included himself. Yet he not only came very close to stumbling in his faith and in his devotion toward God, but also doubted his statement, "God is Good to all the faithful."

PSALM 73:3-9

Being Envious of the Prosperity of the Wicked I Almost Stumbled.

- **Psalm 73:3-9:** For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ⁴For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek. ⁵They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind. ⁶Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment. ⁷Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies. ⁸They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression. ⁹They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth.

Asaph, a very godly man almost fell away from the LORD, because he was envious of the wicked, the arrogant and the prideful that were prospering. He looked at the character of those who:

- Perverted justice for their own advantage and oppressed the poor for their own gain.
- Used violence to rob others from what was rightfully theirs to satisfy the greed of their own heart.
- Had hearts that were filled with pride, malice, deceit and lies
- Spoke blasphemies filled with malice and mockery against God.

This does only apply to the secular world, but also the religious world especially religious priests, prophets, rulers and leaders who have great power, authority and influence over vast numbers of people who are corrupt and deceitful and twist and pervert the word of God and the Gospel for their own advantage and use God's people as merchandise for their own gain. Asaph's great struggle that almost caused him to stumble in his faith was in observing such corrupt and selfish people and seeing that despite all their selfishness sinfulness they not only prospered in worldly riches and lived a life of indulgent luxury and leisure, but were also healthy and had no trouble as the faithful and those who have a kind and compassionate heart toward others do. Mostly because the rich have no worries about paying debts, doctors, dentists, school fees, and paying for whatever else they need and can pay or bribe their way out of most troubles.

2

PSALM 73:10-12

God's people Turn Back to the Wicked, and Find no Fault in Them.

- **Psalm 73:10-12:** Therefore his people turn back to them, and find no fault in them. ¹¹And they say, "How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?" ¹²Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches.

Because God's judgment upon the wicked is delayed, many turn back when they see the corrupt and the deceitful prospering especially when it is false, deceitful and corrupt religious leaders. Even Asaph a godly and faithful man almost stumbled when he observed such things and wondered why would God the Most High allow the wicked to be at ease and increase in riches? As he pondered these injustices it confused him to such an extent that it seemed to him that God lacked the knowledge that wicked men were prospering by their wicked deeds since natural human reasoning dictates that the wicked should suffer and the righteous prosper, but this is not what Asaph is seeing.

In Vain I have Kept My Heart Clean for I have been Stricken.

- **Psalm 73:13-14:** All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. ¹⁴For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning.

Even though Asaph had kept his heart clean and remained innocent before the LORD he was suffering some kind of trouble and hardship every day (most likely some form of severe sickness or some great loss of wealth or a loved one) and because of this he felt he has spent his life in vain, by living right before the LORD.

PSALM 73:15

If I spoke, I would betray the Generation of Your Children.

- **Psalm 73:15:** If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed the generation of your children (offend against the generation of thy children in KJV)

This verse means if I share my innermost doubts and thoughts concerning my reasoning and questions concerning God's ways with the wicked and the righteous, I might appear to be faithless to the faithful of God's people or may perhaps offend, discourage and grieve them. Asaph feared if he shared his feelings and all the thoughts of his mind and his heart it might not only raise questions in others that would not otherwise occur to them and unsettle the foundations of their faith, their peace, their hope, and their joy in God, but also cause them to be led to think if such a faithful man doubted God how could they possibly place their confidence and trust in God. The fact Asaph restrained himself from speaking anything which would tend to lessen confidence in God or suggest to the mind grounds of distrust or disturb the peace, joy and hope of the faithful regardless of what his own troubles and doubts might be shows that he was a godly man who considered the faith and well-being of others.

NOTE: Asaph's good and considerate attitude though enormously commendable should not discourage any faithful brother and sister in Christ from sharing such doubts and questions to another. Especially since God has inspired the translators of the Bible to include this Psalm in the Canon of the Scriptures for all to read. But wisdom should be applied, obviously it would be foolish to share such doubts with new converts or those who are weak in faith, but it is also foolish to keep them hidden while struggling with them if they are causing us to doubt our faith. The wise and Scriptural thing to do is to share such inner thoughts and feelings with those who have strong faith and have had longer experiences walking with the Lord and therefore have had wider opportunities of to experience all the difficulties that faithful brothers and sisters in Christ may experience in order that the difficulties may be solved and the doubts calmed down and removed. Some might say the perfect way to solve such spiritual doubts and questions is to go to the Lord himself, certainly this is the ideal, but new converts and those weak in their faith do not always have such maturity of faith and may not as yet walked with him long enough to have such an intimate relationship. It is for this reason the apostle Paul wrote:

- We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. (Rom. 15:1)

How fantastic is this: sometimes we read a principal in the New Testament and think it is something new, but in actual fact it is simply a reiteration of an Old Testament principle of God expressed in different words. This should not surprise anyone since God's nature and principles concerning life, character and how we should treat others never changes they remain the same from Genesis to revelation. For those who think

this statement is not true consider the following, Jesus commands all his followers, "Love their neighbour as themselves" (Mark 12:31) meaning do not deliberately do harm to other humans. No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself.

James the brother of Jesus said:

- If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing well. (James 2:8).

James calls Jesus command, "Love your neighbour as yourself," the royal law and says if we are keeping this one law we are doing well. The thing God hates the most (Old and New Testament) is when we deliberately do harm to another person, physically, verbally, financially sexually, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do-good to others. It is interesting to notice that the major crime that God points out in Noah's time and one of the main reasons for the flood was because of all the violence in the land. The following words of the Old Testament prophets Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah are summed up in Jesus command love your neighbour as yourself.

- Micah wrote: "What the LORD requires of mankind is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God" (Micah 6:5-10).
- Isaiah says: "The LORD loves justice, hates robbery and wrong doing" (Isaiah 61:8).
- Jeremiah said: "Those who know God practise steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, because it is in these things that God delights" (Jer. 9:24).

The great prophets Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah clearly show the law is about doing-good to others and protecting them from harm and hurt. The spirit under-pinning the Ten Commandments, is love because each law protects another human from harm. Paul in his letter to the Romans wrote:

- Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:10).

Paul shines a brilliant spotlight on the truth that the spirit underpinning the law is love, because the spirit of the law is to protect the innocent from all types of harm and hurt, whoever keeps the law will do no wrong to a neighbour (neighbour embraces all mankind not just those in God's Kingdom). Those who belong to Christ aim to keep the law not to get saved, but because it honours God and brings a good testimony to the name of Jesus and the Christian faith and because it is the right and loving thing to do. The faithful in Christ's global Kingdom not only understand that righteousness that leads to eternal life is a free gift of God that comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and cannot be earned by self-effort, but also know that from the love of God dwelling within their heart and displayed on the bloodstained cross of Calvary they are called to live a lifestyle that honours the King and Saviour they worship and follow and called to treat others with decency, respect and honest justice.

Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount: the constant theme throughout Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount is doing what is right before God by seeking the way of peace in all situations. Jesus calls Christians to treat people fairly and with respect, dignity, decency grace compassion, kindness, mercy and to be quick to forgive. This means living a life that honours God and the Lord Jesus Christ is about doing right to those in the church and those outside of it. This is the reason the message Jesus spoke on the mountain is referred to as, "The Famous Sermon" because the principals if followed not only by Christians, but all humanity are the only way to peace (Matt 5). Based on the commandment, love your neighbour as yourself and the law it could be said that a wicked and evil person is one who deliberately and consciously denies the existence of God and

deliberately does harm to other humans. These all show that God's laws concerning human attitude, character and behaviour toward others has not changed from Genesis to Revelation. For further information on Jesus Famous Sermon see: "Matthew 5" in, Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Seeking help: today no one in the family of Christ would say it is wrong for the young in Christ and those with fewer advantages of education or of less experience than others to seek out a man or woman who has greater experience of the Christian faith and greater knowledge of the Scriptures and the Gospel to share their inward thoughts and doubt concerning their faith with. But it would be wrong to limit this principal to only new converts and those of less experience since even those who shepherd and oversee the flock of Christ though they may not have difficulties concerning their faith they often have difficulties concerning their ministry that they need to share with others.

PSALM 73:16-20

I did Not Understand, Until I Discerned the End of the wicked.

- **Psalm 73:16-20:** But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, ¹⁷until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end. ¹⁸Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. ¹⁹How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors! ²⁰Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms.

It appears to Asaph that God not only finds no fault in the wicked, but He does not even favour the righteous. This causes him such confusion he wonders how he will find an answer to such a dilemma that will satisfy his mind and what appears to be indifference on God's part to the state and well-being of the righteous and God's lack of judgment upon the wicked. He thought it was going to be almost impossible or at least very tiresome to find some kind of answer that would appease him, but to his surprise as soon as he went into the presence of God it suddenly came to him. When Asaph saw the end of the wicked, he realised God has set them on a slippery path. The LORD makes them fall and, in a moment, they are engulfed in fear and at their end they will be like phantoms swept away to nothing never to rise again and see the light of day.

PSALM 73:21-24

I was Ignorant, Toward God, Yet, He will Receive Me to Glory.

- **Psalm 73:21-24:** When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, ²²I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you. ²³Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. ²⁴You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory.

When Asaph saw the end of the wicked, he was instantly convicted in his heart for thinking so wrongly and badly of God and doubting His ways and His wisdom. He was so convicted of his heart attitude that he felt as if he had been as some kind of ignorant brute beast before the LORD. Now here is the glory of Asaph's faith even though he had been questioning the goodness of God he had no doubt God would continue to guide him as He did in giving him an answer to his confusion and by doing so brought peace to his mind and removed all forms of doubt and after his death he was fully confident God would receive him to glory.

PSALM 73:25-28

Who have I in Heaven, but God, there is Nothing Besides Him.

- **Psalm 73:25-28:** Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. ²⁶My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. ²⁷For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. ²⁸But 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.

Once Asaph understood that all that awaits the wicked is the darkness of the grave and that those who deny God or use His word and Gospel for their own gain will perish forever and that the LORD will put an eternal end to every hypocrite and false and corrupt religious teacher his entire attitude changed. He proclaims truly God is good to those who are pure in heart and that it is good for him to be near to God. He has made the LORD his refuge and will tell of all His works. Asaph concludes with the beautiful words, "Who does he have in heaven, but the LORD, there is nothing on earth that he desire besides God, his flesh and his heart may fail (i.e., sickness, old age and death), but God is his refuge and his eternal portion forever.

A practical application: some believers faithfully serve God in ministry, or as a Sunday school teacher or as a worship leader or a musician in a choir or as an evangelist or as one who attends to the duties and service of the church etc., and sacrifice some pleasures of the world to honour God and bring a good testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ. Though God's Kingdom would be greatly enhanced if all lived this way there is a subtle and hidden danger that can come with such faithfulness after some time of faithful service. "How so," some might ask, simply this: the tempter enters the mind with the thought, "God owes you, you have been so faithful, look at those in the congregation they do nothing." If this thought is entertained and believed and then a crisis of life hits that causes grief, sorrow or some form of serious trouble or hardship, there is great danger the believer will turn bitter against God because they have been deceived into believing God owes them.

God owes us nothing: but He has given us everything at great cost to his own heart. Sadly, some today do not perceive the love of God and because of this lack of perception of God's love and grace tend to determine whether God loves them by their good or bad circumstances. They feel if life is charmed and blessed God loves them, but if it suddenly takes a turn for the worse and trouble comes they feel God has withdrawn his love, but this is superstition and judging God according to the fickle circumstances of this world and stems from an underlying mindset that believes God owes us if we faithfully serve Him. When anyone today who believes in Christ thinks God is not rewarding them as they believe He should and because of this erroneous mindset doubt God's love all they have to do is look back to the bloodstained cross and see what it cost the heart of the Father to save us and how much his Son suffered to redeem us and spiritually crown and cloth us with his royal and majestic robe of righteous so that we could be justified and granted eternal life in everlasting glory apart from self-effort and strictly adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days or keeping religious customs and traditions.

This truth should comfort every faithful brother and sister in Christ since it is certain if God was prepared to sacrifice his Son for us, while we were indifferent and apathetic toward Him and uninterested and unconcerned about what honoured Him and what didn't He will with great joy do everything to keep us for eternal life now we love His Son. (He does this by daily lavishing us with grace). It could be said the great reward God bestows upon the faithful is covering all our sinful dysfunction and aberrations that dwell within our fallen corrupted body of flesh (i.e., anger, jealousy, lustful thoughts, pride, greed, coveting, selfishness and such like things) with His grace and the great reward Christ bestows upon the faithful is his righteousness that saves us to eternal life and everlasting happiness. God promises us spiritual life here and now in this world and in the world to come, not worldly riches and material possessions.

NOTE: most Christians consider murder, rape, adultery, theft and perverting justice and blasphemy, twisting and perverting God's word, and any acts of violence against another human or any behaviour that breaks the law as great sins. But Asap was not guilty of any of these in fact he was chief worship leader in the House of God, his sin that almost caused him to fall away from God was envy of the wicked who had life better than he did (v3). This Psalm is a great warning to all the faithful of the danger of coveting those who appear to have a charmed life and envying the rich and those who live in luxury.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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