

Psalm 73: Refocusing Our Worldview

“Out of our worldview flow our foundational beliefs. These may be compared to the trunk of the tree. The trunk relates to our view of our purpose in life, how we respond to resistance to that purpose, including the origin and overcoming of evil, and the nature of the highest good which can be achieved in our life. Out of these foundational beliefs flow our guiding principles. These may be compared to the branches of the tree and be expressed in our character or basic attitudes towards the value of people, particularly also the poor and needy, those who oppose us, work and ethics, and creation itself. Out of these guiding principles and attitudes flow our practical decisions, behaviours, words and actions. These outcomes may be illustrated by fruit of the tree. Fruit is what most people see and would say characterize us. But how we live our lives is in fact already largely determined by our worldview.”

- Murray Moerman, http://www.murraymoerman.com/home/importance_of_worldview.asp

Asaph is filled with bitterness: God allows the righteous to SUFFER while the unrighteous PROSPER (1-14).

- A. He begins with his conclusion, a proverb already widely accepted by his contemporaries, that God is GOOD to the pure in heart (1).

¹*Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.*

1. **Psalm 24:3-5 (ESV)** ³ Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? ⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. ⁵**He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation.**

- B. He arrives at this conclusion only after a very close call with DOUBT (2).

²*But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped.*

1. Why does Asaph describe his doubt with the metaphor of feet slipping, almost losing his foothold and coming close to the edge of a cliff? What does this metaphor convey about doubt and faith?
2. Doubt is something that often sneaks up on us. It's a gradual process. It starts little, perhaps by letting resentment reside in our heart, and before we realize what is happening, we are close to falling over the cliff into all out disbelief that God has our best interests at heart.

- C. His close call starts with being ENVIOUS of the wicked (3-5)

³*For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

⁴*For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek.*

⁵*They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind.*

1. (Webster's Unabridged) ENVIOUS: “discontent, or uneasiness at the sight of another's excellence or good fortune, accompanied with some degree of hatred and a desire to possess equal advantages; malicious grudging.”
2. Pilate: “he knew that for **envy** they had delivered Him” (Matt 27:18)
3. The ungodly seem to have it made, no troubles, no problems; we may see them enjoying all the pleasures. Asaph wants their life, because his life is full of troubles.
 - a. Who are some of the "ungodly" of our culture and what effect do they have on

people?

- b. Celebrities, movie stars, politicians, intellectuals, the wealthy, the powerful.
 - c. What is it we envy about these people?
4. What is the hidden message in envy? What does Asaph imply about God when he envies the ungodly?
- a. God doesn't know what he is doing; He makes mistakes.
 - b. God doesn't really love me; He doesn't have my best interests at heart.
 - c. I don't like who I am or how God made me.
 - d. I'm resentful of God's plan for me and what he has NOT given me.

D. They are ARROGANT! How can God allow them to be so blessed? (6-12)

⁶*Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment.*

⁷*Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies.*

⁸*They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression.*

⁹*They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth.*

¹⁰*Therefore his people turn back to them, and find no fault in them. [£]*

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

¹²*Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches.*

1. It's as though God doesn't see their wickedness.
2. Asaph's inaccurate view of God's justice is similar to Job's friends:
"Job, you're having an unusual amount of trouble. That tells us you must be a terrible sinner. If you would just repent of whatever it is you're doing that offends God, then you could return to prosperity."

They offer lecture after lecture with their incomplete view of God. If you're living a righteous life, good things will happen to you. If you're living an unrighteous life, bad things will happen to you. So we can easily tell the good guys from the bad guys. The good guys have a lot of money and good health and everything goes their way. The bad guys have a whole lot of troubles.

E. Asaph has become SELF-FOCUSED and bitter in his envy (13-14)

¹³*All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence.*

¹⁴*For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning.*

1. His faith is in VAIN. His purity of heart is USELESS. God gives him more than his share of TROUBLES.
2. I have been stupid to obey and play by the rules – what did it get me? Asaph was hoping his "pure heart" would get him the good life.
"I was told in Bible class that if I would be a good boy, God would take care of me and bless me. I was told that God punishes bad people. But that's not what I see. I see almost the opposite. So what's the point in being so careful to do God's will? All I seem to get is criticism from others and difficulties in life."
3. In his bitterness Asaph is being deceived into thinking that engaging in the sinfulness of the world is better than doing God's will.
4. If we make ourselves the FOCUS of our life, we are asking to be discontented and miserable, and eventually bitter and lost.

Asaph comes to his senses: He sees GOD'S PERSPECTIVE (15-28)

A. He realizes how his anger, envy, and faithlessness could AFFECT OTHERS (15)

¹⁵*If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed the generation of your children.*

1. He was one of the leaders in the court of David, so his influence was great.
2. Expressing doubts or resentment toward God can cause other believers to stumble and doubt.

B. He begins to UNDERSTAND as he thinks about it in the sanctuary of the temple (16-17)

¹⁶*But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task,*

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

1. Asaph's first approach in dealing with all these his negative feelings is to try to figure it all out by using his own reason. Difficult, tiresome, no real answers.
2. Then he goes into the sanctuary of God (into God's presence) and becomes quiet before God. The implication is that he is asking God for HIS perspective.

C. He remembers that the unrighteous are GONE IN A MOMENT (18-20)

¹⁸*Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin.*

¹⁹*How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors!*

²⁰*Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms.*

D. Asaph finally realizes how FOOLISH he has been (21-22)

²¹*When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart,*

²²*I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you.*

1. Envy toward the world and doubt about God eats away at our insides – it rots the very core of who we are; it causes grief and bitterness.
2. It make us senseless and ignorant fools before God. We're like a dumb animal.

E. He REJOICES that he is granted the privilege of possessing the most important thing, God. (21-26)

²³*Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand.*

²⁴*You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory.*

²⁵*Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.*

²⁶*My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

1. Even though Asaph doubted God's faithfulness, God didn't leave him. He upheld him.
2. Now Asaph will listen to God and will be welcomed into glory to be with the One he most wants to be with.
3. Even after Asaph's body has worn out, God will give him strength forever.

F. He REDEDICATES himself to his purpose to tell others about God. (27-28)

²⁷*For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.*

²⁸*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.*

Some generally stated lessons from Psalm 73:

- The presence of success and riches is not always a sign of God's favor. The absence of success and riches is not always a sign of God's disfavor.
- God is good and just all the time, regardless of my circumstances, or how I think or feel.
- I must look to God for answers to troubling questions.
- I have no security apart from God.
- Being in God's presence is the most important thing in this life.
- Worship (focusing on God and telling him how great he is) whether done in prayer or song or meditation on the Word gets our eyes off ourselves and onto God's changeless, powerful, awesome character. It allows us to see our circumstances from God's perspective. It builds our faith and helps us to actually believe God's promises. It helps us focus on eternity and to see this life as temporary and fragile. When we worship, we encounter the living God and we are changed for having been in his presence.