

Psalm 73 When It Seems You are Good--For Nothing!

INTRODUCTION¹ NOTES AT END

me

Leadership?, v 10?, v 15, see handwritten notes in folder.

Link between 73-ff? 73, getting the right perspective, 74, When the prayers of God's saints are unanswered (you think God isn't hearing you) 75, when you want God to rise up and deal with your enemies

Leupold

FROM THIS TITLE it appears that we have another problem psalm before us, reminding us to some extent of Ps. 37 and 49. Its thought is not too far removed from the problem that is discussed in the book of Job. Mankind has always been more or less plagued by problems. In the Psalter these difficulties are taken into the presence of God and discussed with Him or they are illuminated by the light that emanates from Him. ¶To be more precise about the problem, it centers in the difficulty posed by the seeming prosperity of the wicked man. Why does he have more success and less troubles than do godly men who have been sincere about their godliness? Or restated, does sincere piety affect the fortunes of man for good? Or, Can earthly happiness be obtained with a total disregard for God and His will? or in whatever other way men may care to formulate the issue. ¶We may indicate the distinctive nature of the solution offered in this psalm by noting that it penetrates deeper than does any other that has ever been attempted on the Old Testament level. It mounts to the very presence of God, holds close to Him, and then views the situation from that vantage point. This amounts to looking at things in the way that God sees them; and any man will readily concede that, viewed thus, things must come into far clearer focus, and the real issues must appear as what they are.²

Kidner

This great psalm is the story of a bitter *and* despairing search, which has now been rewarded beyond all expectation. It recalls the kind of questions that distracted Job and Jeremiah; but at the end they no longer seem unanswerable, and the psalmist has a confession and a supreme discovery to share.

73:1

Kidner

Verse 1 stands somewhat by itself, and is the key to the whole psalm, telling not merely of what God can do for a man but of what He can be to him. The phrase, *pure in heart*, is more significant than it may seem, for the psalm will show the relative unimportance of circumstances in comparison with attitudes, which may be either soured by self-interest (3, 13) or set free by love (25). *Pure* means more than clean-minded, though it certainly includes it (see the ruinous effect of impurity in Tit. 1:15; 2 Pet. 2:14); basically **it** is being totally Committed to God. As for *heart*, its occurrence six times in the psalm emphasizes, as Martin Buber has pointed out, that **'the state of the heart determines whether a man lives in the truth, in which God's goodness is experienced, or in the semblance of truth, where the fact that it "goes ill" with him is confused with the illusion that God is not good to him'**.

¹ See also Psalm 37, 49.

² Leupold, *Psalms*, pp. 522, 523.

Tate

Ja, Nevertheless: Surely: *The adverb “truly”* As stated in note 1.b., the Hebrew particle Ja appears at three crucial places in the psalm: vv. 1, 13, 18 (see Ps 62, note 2.a. for discussion of this word). Its force is that of “yes, even though the evidence seems to give it little support”—a condition which is contrary of what is expected. The threefold Ja gives this psalm its character of “The Great Nevertheless.” In v 1, the force of the “truly” is “in spite of everything to the contrary, Good is good to Israel.” In v 13, the force is: “in spite of all the indications of well-being of the wicked, I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence”—which means that the speaker refused to run after the prosperous wicked and adopt their ways. He/she remained among those Israelites who were “pure in heart,” those who could “wash their hands in innocence.” The language in v 13 alludes to rituals in which the washing of hands declared one’s innocence and indicated that the person was “clean” (or “pure”) for worship. See Ps 26:6; Deut21: 6; Matt 27:24. Priests were to wash their hands before entering the tent of meeting (Exod 30:19—21), a symbol of moral purity (Ps 23:4).³ ¶The force of the particle shifts back and forth between an affirmative meaning, “truly/surely! yes,” and a restrictive meaning, “only/alone.’ **Basically it seems to involve comparison, either overt or implied: “Yes, but on the contrary/nevertheless.”** N. H. Snaith (“The Meaning of the Hebrew” Ja VT14 [1964] 221—25).⁴

73:2

73:3

73:4

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73:7

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73:9

73:10

73:11

73:12

73:13

Word Study/ heart and hands

73:14

73:15

73:16

73:17

³ Tate, *Psalms*, p. 235.

⁴ Tate, *Psalms*, p 118.

73:18

73:19

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⁵ See Psalm 1

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What is the problem?

“I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked,” Psalm 73:3

I wanted what they had, 73: 3.

1. Physical health, v 4-5.
2. They are prosperous and successful in the eyes of other men, v 6-10.

They have a sense of accomplishment, v 6

They are successful, 7, 3.

They make promises, statements and predictions that are wrong but attractive to the masses, 8-10.

They seem to be right in their evaluation of God's interest in their objectives, 11.

They are on their way up both in status and substance, v 12.

Because it seemed that I had been pure in heart and received only grief for my efforts, vv 13, 14.

But I couldn't tell anybody what I was thinking because of the effect it would have had upon godly people, 15

What was the source of the problem?

I didn't understand, 16, 22.

I didn't see the eternal perspective or the eternal presence.

I focused only on the temporal perspective.

I wanted what was fleeting and temporal—it seemed more attractive than what was eternal and glorious, 3.

Things aren't always as they seem.

The adverb “truly, verily, surely” The Hebrew particle appears at three crucial places in the psalm: vv. 1, 13, 18. Its force is that of “yes, even though the evidence seems to give it little support, in spite of all appearances to the contrary—certain things are true.”

What changed the situation?

v 17, a “reality check.”

I got a fresh view of God and my final destiny, 17a.

The best thing in this life is to be near _GOD the blesor and enjoy his presence, not to enjoy the temporal blessings.

v 23, 24a, 25b, 26a, 28.

My final destiny is one of grand anticipation.

vv 24b, 25a, 26c.

I got a fresh perspective of their final destiny, 17b.

Their final destiny, 18-20, 27.

There is great danger in losing perspective, 2, 15.

The conclusion

Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart, v 1.

So what?

Learn not to focus on what is temporal, visible, fleeting will pass away. You will begin longing for it and these desires will blind you to eternal realities—you will be on slippery ground, v 2.

Learn to enjoy the presence and character of God. Work on it, 23-26, 28.

Begin to develop an eternal perspective. Ponder what will last for eternity, what has eternal value.

It will help with anger!