

Psalm 73

A psalm of Asaph.

亚萨的诗。

This psalm is one of twelve psalms that were written by Asaph. He was one of the chief singers appointed by King David for the worship in the Temple in Jerusalem. David's son Solomon actually built the Temple, but David made all the arrangements for it before he died, even down to the details of who the chief singers should be.

Asaph was a true believer in the Lord.

1 "Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart."

神实在恩待以色列那些清心的人。

He knew that God was good, and he knew that God would bless Israel. And he knew that the true Israel, the true people of God, weren't necessarily all those who were physically descended from Abraham. The Old Testament shows us that most of them rebelled against God. They weren't God's chosen people. But rather the true people of God are all those who are spiritually descended from Abraham as the "father of the faithful."

Galatians 3:7

"Understand then, that those who believe are children of Abraham."

所以你们要知道那以信为本的人，就是亚伯拉罕的子孙。

In other words, the true children of God are all those who are pure in their hearts.

Christ said:

Matthew 5:8

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

清心的人有福了，因为他们必得见神。

These are the true believers. These are the only ones on their way to heaven, who will escape the judgment to come. Are you one of them? By nature none of us are pure in our hearts. We're all born with a sinful nature. We need a new heart even to be able to begin to be pure in our hearts. May we all cry to God for mercy until we receive a new heart from Him. Only then, can we have a heart that desires and seeks after purity.

But Asaph had a problem.

2 "But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold."

至于我，我的脚几乎失闪。我的脚险些滑跌。

He was a true believer, but there was one big question that he just could not understand. He knew that God was good to all His people. He knew that God would keep all His people, and look after them. He knew that God was kind and generous to His people. These things weren't the problem. He knew all that from his own experience. His problem came when he saw the wicked seemingly having such a better time of things than he was.

3 "For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

我见恶人和狂傲人享平安，就心怀不平。

4 "They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong."

他们死的时候，没有疼痛。他们的力气，却也壮实。

5 "They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills."

他们不像别人受苦，也不像别人遭灾。

He envied the wicked. They were so much more prosperous than he was. They didn't seem to have any difficulties in their lives and they were healthy and strong. Now, how much of this was actually true, we don't know. Wicked people always put on an outward show. Maybe they were really miserable in their hearts. They'd never show it if they were. But at least to Asaph, it seemed that life was so easy for them. God seemed to be blessing the wicked more than those who truly loved righteousness and at least tried and wanted to do good. He thought that it was so unfair of God to allow such wicked people to prosper.

Do we envy anybody else? Maybe our unbelieving neighbour seems to be getting along in life so much better than we are. They seem to have so much ease and pleasure, and here we are struggling away. Yes, we've got the Lord to help us, but it seems like we're always finding life difficult, whereas they just drift through a life of relative ease.

6 "Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence."

所以骄傲如链子戴在他们的项上。强暴像衣裳遮住他们的身体

7 "From their callous hearts comes iniquity; their evil imaginations have no limits."

他们的眼睛，因体胖而凸出。他们所得的，过于心里所想的。

As a result of their ease in this world, they become full of themselves. They become proud and arrogant. They have pride in their achievements. "Look what I've done." "Look at me, aren't I wonderful." They're so full of pride and

are so self-centred, that they become violent if anybody criticises them. They happily live openly sinful lives, and whatever their evil imaginations come up with, they are able to have and enjoy it, without a problem.

8 “They scoff, and speak with malice; with arrogance they threaten oppression.”

他们讥笑人，凭恶意说欺压人的话。他们说话自高。

9 “Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth.”

他们的口褻渎上天，他们的舌毀谤全地。

And they can use their mouths to get anything they want out of life. Do you know anybody with the ability to be able to control any conversation to always get what they want? There are a lot of people in this world like that, who have this “power of persuasion.” It’s a real power, and it’s a very dangerous thing.

10 “Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance.”

所以神的民归到这里，喝尽了满杯的苦水。

The problem is that this “power of persuasion” works. It will gather a following. We’re all so easily taken in by dominating personalities and their persuasive speaking. These evil people know they can manipulate others to do anything they say. Think of the dictators of the world. How did Adolf Hitler come to power? The people voted for him. They wanted him. Simple. People will blindly follow such personalities, wherever they lead them. That’s why it’s so dangerous.

11 “They say, ‘How would God know? Does the Most High know anything?’ ”

他们说，神怎能晓得？至高者岂有知识呢？

They become so arrogant that they challenge God Himself, setting themselves up above Him. Many would deny the existence of God completely, and they would quite openly allow their followers to worship them instead.

And we must also be aware that there are plenty of these kind of dominating leaders in the church as well. They effectively put themselves in the place of God Himself in just the same way. And many ordinary churchgoers end up following men, rather than God. So don’t blindly follow every silver-tongued preacher you hear! We must check everything we hear against the Bible before we believe anybody.

We are warned in the Scriptures to particularly look out for this as we come nearer to the end of time:

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

“Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day [i.e. the Day of Judgment] will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.”

人不拘用什么法子，你们总不要被他诱惑，因为那日子以前，必有离道反教的事，并有那大罪人，就是沉沦之子，显露出来。他是抵挡主，高抬自己，超过一切称为神的，和一切受人敬拜的。甚至坐在神的殿里，自称是神。

12 “This is what the wicked are like – always free of care, they go on amassing wealth.”

看哪，这就是恶人。他们既是常享安逸，财宝便加增。

So Asaph, a true believer who loved God, had a serious problem when he saw all these things happening around him. How could God allow all this to happen? Wickedness wasn’t being punished, but rather being promoted. Evil men were successfully persuading others to follow their evil practices, and God didn’t seem to stop them. And the wicked seemed to be completely carefree, and they were getting richer and richer through their actions. Asaph wondered what’s the point of keeping ourselves from evil, of fleeing from sin, of trying to keep ourselves from wickedness, when sin actually seemed to bring prosperity and advantage in this world?

13 “Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence.”

我实在徒然洁净了我的心，徒然洗手表明无辜。

14 “All day long I have been afflicted, and every morning brings new punishments.”

因为我终日遭灾难，每早晨受惩治。

Asaph was really beginning to think along these lines. He couldn’t see the point of keeping himself from sin, as the Lord wants us all to do. But Asaph also realised that if he had have spoken out about this to anyone, his witness for the truth would have been destroyed.

15 “If I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed your children.”

我若说，我要这样讲，这就是以奸诈待你的众子。

Do we have doubts in our mind about God? About what He’s doing in the world? About whether we’re truly one of His children? It’s at this point that we should be careful what we say. If we truly believe in the Lord, and if we

diligently stay close to Him, He will keep us from completely destroying our witness for Him by saying unwise things about Him to others. If we have a problem with the Lord and His ways, let's keep quiet about it until He sheds more light on the situation for us.

But Asaph wasn't the only one in the Bible who had a hard time thinking on these issues.

Jeremiah 12:1-2

"You are always righteous, Lord, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease? You have planted them, and they have taken root; they grow and bear fruit. You are always on their lips but far from their hearts."

耶和華阿，我與你爭辯的時候，你顯為義。但有一件，我還要與你理論，惡人的道路為何亨通呢？大行詭詐的為何得安逸呢？你栽培了他們，他們也扎了根，長大，而且結果。他們的口是與你相近，心却與你遠離。

Jeremiah had the same problem about the prosperity of the wicked. He acknowledged that the Lord had allowed them to get into that position, and he saw clearly that although they professed the true religion outwardly, they were far from God in their hearts. And he found it so unfair that these people were prospering. The Lord replied to him, but it wasn't the answer he expected:

Jeremiah 12:5-6

"If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan? Your relatives, members of your own family— even they have betrayed you; they have raised a loud cry against you. Do not trust them, though they speak well of you."

耶和華說，你若與步行的人同跑，尚且覺累，怎能與馬賽跑呢？你在平安之地，雖然安穩，在約旦河邊的叢林要怎樣行呢？因為連你弟兄和你父家都用奸詐待你。他們也在你後邊大聲喊叫，雖向你說好話，你也不要信他們。

The Lord told Jeremiah that if he couldn't understand what was happening around him now, then he wasn't going to understand what the Lord had up until now hidden from him – namely, his own family had betrayed him. God answered Jeremiah by sending him an even more difficult situation. Now, all that the Lord brings upon us is under His overall control. It would have to be Jeremiah's faith that was to keep him faithful to the Lord, not what he saw in external circumstances.

Habakkuk was another prophet who also had this problem:

Habakkuk 1:2-4

“How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, ‘Violence!’ but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.”

他说，耶和華阿，我呼求你，你不應允，要到几時呢？我因強暴哀求你，你還不拯救。你為何使我看見罪孽？你為何看着奸惡而不理呢？毀滅和強暴在我面前。又起了爭端和相鬥的事。因此律法放鬆，公理也不顯明。惡人圍困義人。所以公理顯然顛倒。

Habakkuk too saw so much injustice in the land. There was injustice and violence everywhere. He cried to the Lord asking Him why He doesn't do anything about it? To which the Lord replied:

Habakkuk 1:5-6

“Look at the nations and watch – and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwellings not their own.”

耶和華說，你們要向列國中觀看，大大驚奇。因為在你們的時候，我行一件事，雖有人告訴你們，你們总是不信。我必興起迦勒底人，就是那殘忍暴躁之民，通行遍地，占據那不屬自己的住處。

The Lord was going to do something about it soon enough. God was going to bring a far worse nation, the Babylonians, to be the instruments of His justice on Judah. They would do what was unthinkable to the Jews, and take away their land and destroy the Temple. Just like Jeremiah, this was the last thing that Habakkuk ever expected. How could God do this and allow an even more evil nation to prosper? Of course, in time, Babylon itself would be judged for its own wickedness, but that would be seventy years later.

Habakkuk finally came to terms with God's response, and concluded:

Habakkuk 2:4

“The righteous will live by his faith.”

惟義人因信得生。

Now, this is quite an important verse in the Bible. It's actually quoted three times in different parts of the New Testament, in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38. This was the call of the Protestant Reformation. In the Reformation, the main issue was the question of how God can declare sinners righteous, and accept them into His presence. Does God look at our works to declare anyone righteous? No. We're not saved by works. We can't work our

way to heaven ourselves, we're not good enough. We're not even saved by faith with a little bit of works. Because we can't do any good works at all, by nature. We must be saved by faith alone. It has to be this way, because only then can the Lord put a new heart within us, which then makes us able to begin to do any good works at all.

So the righteous have to live by their faith. If they looked to their works, all they would see is sin. We have to live by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that He has paid the price for our sin, and that we are now declared righteous in God's sight and will escape the punishment we deserve.

But we also see that we need to live by our faith in our practical everyday circumstances as well. We have to live by faith that the Lord is still in control of all things, despite everything we see around us seeming as though He isn't.

2 Corinthians 5:7

"We live by faith, not by sight."

因我们行事为人，是凭着信心，不是凭着眼见。

We only have to go out of our front doors, or turn on our television sets, to see wickedness everywhere. Many, many people just cannot believe in a God of love when they see the world so full of sin and evil. "How can God allow this or that to happen?" they would say.

And true believers like Asaph, Jeremiah and Habakkuk, also found this difficult to understand. What's the point of striving for righteousness, of keeping oneself from sin, if everyone else around, who isn't bothered by these things, is having a far better time of it? Well, I suggest that we do what Asaph did. I suggest we enter the sanctuary of God.

16 "When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply"

我思索怎能明白这事，眼看实系为难。

17 "till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny."

等我进了神的圣所，思想他们的结局。

18 "Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin."

你实在把他们安在滑地，使他们掉在沉沦之中。

19 "How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors!"

他们转眼之间，成了何等的荒凉。他们被惊恐灭尽了。

20 "They are like a dream when one awakes; when you arise, Lord, you will despise them as fantasies."

人睡醒了怎样看梦，主阿，你醒了，也必照样轻看他们的影像

If we ever have a problem with the prosperity of the wicked, injustice in society or the extent of wickedness we see around us, then we really need to change our perspective on things. We need to keep our eyes fixed on eternal things, not on things on this earth. God is in control of all things, and there's going to be a judgment.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

我们这至暂至轻的苦楚，要为我们成就极重无比永远的荣耀。原来我们不是顾念所见的，乃是顾念所不见的。因为所见的是暂时的，所不见的是永远的。

If we are to believe in a holy, righteous living Creator God, who is in control of all things, then we must set our sight on things eternal, not just look at things on this earth. Only then can we get rid of any envy we could ever have because of the prosperity of the wicked. If we could only see their upcoming punishment, we would never want to be in their shoes on Judgment Day.

Asaph came to realise this, and he saw how foolish he had been at envying the wicked:

21 “When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered,”

因而我心里发酸，肺腑被刺。

22 “I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.”

我这样愚昧无知，在你面前如畜类一般。

And he came to realise that it's always the right thing to do to put our trust in the Lord, despite outward circumstances seeming to tell us otherwise. Only in Him, following Him, trusting in Him, can we begin to see reality. Reality is seeing things in the light of eternity. We must trust in God despite things seeming to get worse and worse around us.

Habakkuk finally concluded:

Habakkuk 3:17-18

“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.”

虽然无花果树不发旺，葡萄树不结果，橄榄树也不效力，田地不出粮食，圈中绝了羊，棚内也没有牛。然而我要因耶和华欢欣，因救我的神喜乐。

In fact, we're told that things will get worse and worse before the end of time, so we should be ready for these things, not be surprised at them. And we should trust in the Lord to the end.

Talking about the last times, Christ said:

Matthew 24:21

“For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equalled again.”

因为那时必有大灾难，从世界的起头，直到如今，没有这样的灾难，后来也必没有。

Christ also said:

Matthew 10:22

“You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

并且你们要为我的名，被众人恨恶，惟有忍耐到底的，必然得救。

Asaph continued:

23 “Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand.”

然而我常与你同在。你搀着我的右手。

24 “You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.”

你要以你的训言引导我，以后必接我到荣耀里。

There is nowhere else to go for protection and help but to the one true living God, Lord of heaven and earth.

Peter saw this when Christ's disciples began to leave Him.

John 6:68-69

“Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.’”

西门彼得回答说，主阿，你有永生之道，我们还归从谁呢？我们已经信了，又知道你是神的圣者。

Asaph saw this too. He lived a thousand years before Christ came, but true believers in Old Testament times put their trust in a Saviour that was still to come in the future. We have exactly the same hope that Asaph had, except now we know who that Saviour is, Jesus Christ.

Asaph concluded:

25 “Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.”

除你以外，在天上我有谁呢？除你以外，在地上我也没有所爱慕的。

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

我的肉体，和我的心肠衰残。但神是我心里的力量，又是我的福分，直到永远。

Can we say this about the Lord? Is He all we desire on earth as well as in heaven? Is He our strength, even when we go through the valley of the shadow of death? When our bodies start to decay, and death comes near – which will happen to all of us eventually – who have we got to help us through it? Only the Lord can help us in life, and through death. Let us all follow Him. No other religion even claims to be able to save our souls from sin. They all present something we can supposedly do in order to get the blessing. No, there's nothing we can do, except put our trust in the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

27 “Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.”

远离你的，必要死亡。凡离弃你行邪淫的，你都灭绝了。

28 “But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge...”

但我亲近神是与我有益。我以主耶和华为我的避难所，

So, are you quite happy with yourself, your position in this world, your comfortable life without hope and without God in the world? Not really bothered about sin or injustice? So long as you can prosper in this world, it doesn't really matter about anybody else – is that your philosophy of life? Do you think Christians are a bit simple? Do you think that they can't cope with the realities of this world like you can, so they invent an invisible God to help them when they're in trouble? Is that what you think? If this describes you, then watch out. There's going to be a judgment.

Hebrews 9:27

“Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.”

按着定命，人人都有一死，死后且有审判。

The one thing you need to do right now is to repent.

Acts 17:30-31

“In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

世人蒙昧无知的时候，神并不监察，如今却吩咐各处的人都要悔改。因为他已经定了日子，要借着他所设立的人，按公义审判天下。并且叫他从死里复活，给万人作可信的凭据。

And what did this whole lesson encourage Asaph, the believer, to do?

“...I will tell of all your deeds.”

好叫我述说你一切的作为。

We have a marvellous message to give to the world. It is possible for us to be saved from our sinful nature. There is a Saviour. Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Put your trust in Him. If people laugh at us because of this message, so be it. But we know that here is the most wonderful message of all. Let us never let the world out there get us down ever again. Let us not follow the world and its wicked ways, despite the pressure we get on us every day to do so. But rather let us flee from sin and live our lives in the light of eternity.

Colossians 3:1-6

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.”

所以你们若真与基督一同复活，就当求在上面的事。那里有基督坐在神的右边。你们要思念上面的事，不要思念地上的事。因为你们已经死了，你们的生命与基督一同藏在神里面。基督是我们的生命，他显现的时候，你们也要与他一同显现在荣耀里。所以要治死你们在地上的肢体。就如淫乱，污秽，邪情，恶欲，和贪婪，贪婪就与拜偶像一样。因这些事，神的忿怒必临到那悖逆之子。