

AN ACCURATE RE-EVALUATION SHOULD LEAD TO A RENEWED ALLEGIANCE (Ps 73:26-28)

INTRODUCTION: Please take your Bibles and turn once again to Psalm 73. In way of review, here's what we looked at so far.

--In vs 1, Asaph gives us his "bottom line up front": that God is good to **His people**—especially to those who **strive to live a holy**, God-pleasing life! **Why** did Asaph make that statement?

--Because he **hadn't always felt** that way—and he admits that in verse 13! Notice what it says.

--**How** did Asaph get to this point? By looking at the wicked and the **abundance of their possessions** (vs 3) ...and the **absence of their problems** (vs 5)...and that **they arrogantly spoke against God** and seemingly got away with it (vss 9 and 11)! And after focusing on those things, he came up with the conclusion that **God isn't fair**—and it **doesn't pay to try to live a holy life**!

--**What** led him **out of** this mindset? Vs 17: "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; **then** understood I their end."

--**What** was their **end**? From verse 18, we see that it was **God-ordained** ("surely thou didst set them...")...and **forced** ("thou castedst them") and **"into destruction"**—meaning **eternal separation from God**!

From verse 19, we see that their end was **sudden** ("brought into desolation as in a moment!") and **terrifying** ("utterly consumed with terrors"). And from verse 20, we see that their end was **deserved**. They had **despised God**; God was now **despising them**!

--What was **Asaph's response** to being reminded of all this? In verses 21 and 22, we see **his repentance**. He was **grieved** that he had envied the wicked for their **temporary pleasures** instead of remembering their **eternal end**. He was **convicted of his sin** in **doubting the fairness** and goodness of God. And he **was sorry** that he had entertained the thought that **it didn't pay** to try to live for God!

--And then—in vss 23 and 24—Asaph reflects on **God's promises**.

First, he reflected on the promise of God's **continual presence**: "Nevertheless I am continually with thee." **Why** was Asaph so certain that he was always with God? Because God was **holding him** by his right hand!

Second, Asaph reminds himself of God's **promise of guidance** through His Word: "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel..." As I **thought on these two** promises, I couldn't help but think about Psalm 23:1 "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want"—meaning **lack**. If you have God's **continual presence**—and God's **continual guidance**—what more in this life **do you need**?

But there's **more to life** than **this** life—and Asaph also thought about God's **promise of glory**—meaning heaven: "...and afterward receive me to glory." Isn't it wonderful that we too **can know**—here and now—that **we are heaven-bound** and not have to **hope** or **wonder**? And all God's people ought to say, **"Amen!"**

--Lastly, we looked at **Asaph's response** to God's promises in vs 25—which should also be **our response**!

In light of the fact that God is **continually with us** because He holds us by our hand...and that He promises to **guide us** in this life—and **receive us to heaven** in the next life—what should our **response** be?

--**First**, God should be the One we **long for in heaven**. We see that in the **first** part of vs 25: "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" **What about us?** Is that our heartbeat? Do we look forward to heaven because

of **the blessings** that await us—or do we look forward to seeing and being with **the Giver** of those blessings?

--**Second**, God should be the One we **live for on earth**. We see that in the **second** part of vs 25: "...and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

Again, I ask, **what about us?** **Who**—or **what**—is our **priority** on earth? If we are a child of God, we are **bought** with a price—the **precious blood** of Christ! Are **we living for the One** who paid that price? **How** do we do that? By **presenting ourselves** as a living sacrifice unto God!

And that brings us to the **last three verses**, verses 26-28. Here we have what I believe is a **summary** of the entire Psalm. And you already know from your outline, **my** summary of **Asaph's** summary is this: "An Accurate Re-evaluation Should Lead to a Renewed Allegiance!"

First, let's notice... **1. The contrast between Asaph and God (vs 26)**

Vs 26: "My flesh and my heart faileth: **but God** is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

In a nutshell, Asaph is saying that he is *insufficient*—but God is *all-sufficient*!

A. Asaph's weakness is our weakness (vs 26a)

--**What** did Asaph *mean* when he said, "my flesh and my heart faileth"? He's not saying *his skin* failed to protect him from bacteria or UV rays—and he's not saying that *his heart* was failing to pump blood! What he is saying is this: 'My *entire being*—my outer body and my inner spirit—*fail me!*'

--**When was this failure** that Asaph was referring to? Was he *looking back* on how foolish he had been for focusing on the wrong things and thinking it "didn't pay" to live for God? Or was he *looking ahead* with the realization that his *body* would someday fail him—and that he *would pass from this life* into the next?

To which I reply, *probably both!* And what's true of Asaph *is true of us!*

--**Our bodies** fail us, don't they? Bones break, muscles (and/or tendons) tear, sickness enters in uninvited, and our literal, physical heart fails to properly pump blood. On top of that, *our physical strength* slowly—but steadily—*leaves our body* whether we want it to or not!

--And—just like Asaph—our *spirit fails* us too! We get discouraged because of our *family* problems...and *health* problems...and *money* problems. And—if you are a child of God earnestly trying to live for God—you *get discouraged* because you sin *so easily*—and *so often*!

Thankfully, the verse doesn't end there! Asaph shifts his focus from his failings to *God's strength*. And...

B. Asaph's strength can be our strength (vs 26b)

1) The Person of Asaph's strength. *Who* was Asaph's strength? "...but God is the strength of my heart..."

--**How strong** is God? Nothing is *too hard* for Him (Gen 18:14; Jer 32:17), nothing is *impossible* with Him (Lk 1:37), and He can do *whatever He wants* (Ps 115:3; Dan 4:35). On top of that, God's strength *never ends*—and God is *never tired*! We see that in Psalm 121:3-4 and Isaiah 40:28.

2) The place of Asaph's strength: "...but God is the strength of *my heart*..."

--**Why** did Asaph say that God was the strength of *his heart*—meaning his inner man—but not *his body*?

We can't say for sure because we aren't told, but the main reason is probably this: God won't give strength *to this current body forever*! I'm not trying to be mean—or morbid—but this body is going to die someday—unless Jesus comes back first!

And since this body is *going to die*—and you don't get to choose *how or when*—it is more important for God to be the strength *of your heart*—your everlasting, inner most being—than the strength of *your body*!

3) The power of God's strength in the heart. Commentators point out that the Hebrew word "strength" comes from is often translated *rock*. With that in mind, *why* is it important to have God be the *rock*—the *foundation*—of our innermost being?

Because God as our rock *strengthens us as we face trials*. We see a classic example of that in the apostle Paul. Paul was given a "thorn in the flesh" so he would not become proud. *Three times* Paul asked God *to remove* this infirmity—whatever it was—and *three times* God told him "No!" But then Jesus tells Paul *why* He didn't take it away! **II Cor 12:9a** "And He [Jesus] said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: *for my strength is made perfect in weakness...*"

The sad reality of us as humans is that even though our body and our spirits *fail us*; we still *depend on ourselves*! But thankfully, God in His mercy shows us we need Him! And *trials* have a way of doing that!

--A *second* reason God needs to be "the rock"—the foundation—of our innermost being is because He is the only One who can *strengthen us as we face death*. *How* does God *do* that? Let's think through this a little bit.

--**What** happens after this *body* dies? There is an *everlasting*, immaterial part of us—usually called our soul—that will *stand before God*. Since God is *our* Creator—and the Creator *of heaven*—God is also the "*Decider*" of who gets into *His* heaven.

--**How** does God decide *who* gets in? In other words, what are *the entrance requirements* for getting into heaven?

First, the *good* news—there is only *one* requirement for getting into heaven! You don't have to meet a whole list of qualifications—you only have to meet *one*!

But here's the **bad** news—the **one** requirement for getting into heaven is that you have to be **sinless! Yes**—you heard me right—you **have to be sinless** to get into heaven!

How many sins can you commit and still be sinless? **None, right?** You can't commit **any sins** and still be sinless! And none of us have achieved that!

--Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

So the **bad news** is that we are **all disqualified**—none of us meets the entrance requirements for heaven! Now for the **good news**—God paid **our** penalty **for us!** God came to earth as a man—the **man Christ Jesus**—and the penalty that **we deserved**—and that **God required**—was placed on Jesus!

And when we put our faith and trust **in Jesus**—and Jesus alone—to pay the penalty for our sins, we have **peace with God!** Romans 5:1 "Therefore being **justified by faith**, we have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ:"

And when we have **peace with God**—because our sins against Him have **been paid for His way**—we can face death **without fear!**

And that is also how... C. Asaph's portion can be our portion

--**Who**—or **what**—was Asaph's portion? **God** was his portion! What does it mean to have God as our **portion?** We can't spend a lot of time on this, but the word was used to designate **the allotment of land** that would be given to the Jewish tribes—and their families—after they entered the Promised Land. So it was an **inheritance** of sorts.

--The tribe of Levi, however, was **not given a portion**; they were not given an allotment of land. **Why?**

Because **God** was their portion! **Deuteronomy 10:9** "Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; **the Lord** is his inheritance, according as the Lord thy God promised him."

--**How long** was God going to be Asaph's portion? **Forever!**

--**If we** are a child of God, **how long** will God be our portion? **Forever!**

I love how one of the old Puritan writers by the name of **George Swinnock** put it: "...my portion containeth Him whom the heavens, and the heaven of heavens, can never contain.... 'for ever;' not for a year, or an age, or a million of ages, but for eternity.... my portion will ever be full." (Treasury of David, Vol 1, pg 1331).

Quite a thought—God as our portion! Abundantly rich, perfectly good, and lasting forever!

But not everyone receives God as their portion! Asaph points out in vs 27...

2. The contrast between Asaph and the wicked

Notice what it says. **Who** are these that will **perish**—and will be **destroyed?**

--**"They that are far from thee..." Who** are those that are **far from** God?

Isaiah 59:1-2 "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: **But your iniquities** have separated between you and your God, and **your sins** have hid His face from you, that He will not hear." **So sin separates us** from God—and all of us have sinned!

--The second description is "**...all them that go a whoring from thee.**" What does that mean? It means everyone who has been **unfaithful** to God. Just like **the prodigal son**, all of us take what God has given us and waste it on ourselves!

--But **what puts us** into these categories? Do you have to commit **a certain number** of sins—or certain **kinds of sins**—to be far from God? And do you have to be **unfaithful** to God in a **certain way**—or for a certain **length of time**—to match this description?

--I believe Asaph is simply describing the difference between **two groups of sinners**: those who are **forgiven** and those who are **not!** As mentioned earlier in this series, God views people as being in **one of two** groups. In the **Old Testament**, they are referred to as the godly vs the wicked—and the righteous vs the unrighteous.

--In the **New Testament**, however, there are a lot more descriptions for the same two groups: **believers** vs unbelievers, **those who have the Son** vs those who don't, and **saved** vs lost (to name just a few).

--**What happens** to those that die **unforgiven?** Asaph says here in vs 27 that "they shall perish" and that God "hast destroyed them."

--How do we know he is talking in **spiritual terms** and not just referring to **physical** death?
--Because in vs 4, Asaph says "For there are no **bands [pains]** in their death, their strength is firm." In other words, "they live in pleasure and die in ease."
--We also know from verses 17-20, Asaph is describing what happens to the **unforgiven after they die**.
--So "perish" and "destroyed" in this verse refers to **their soul being eternally separated** from God in hell—**not just bodily** death!

Lastly, in vs 28, we see... **3. Asaph's conclusion—and his commitment to draw near to God**

--In vs 1, Asaph gave us his B-L-U-F—meaning his "bottom line up front."

--Here in vs 28, he gives us his B-L-O-B—meaning, of course, his "bottom line on bottom!"

A. Asaph's conclusion

What was Asaph's conclusion? He says it in the first part of vs 28: "But it is **good for me** to draw near to God..." **Why** is it good to draw near to God? Here again is a reminder of what we've looked at already.

1) Because God is the One who "adjusts our perspective" **on life!** Asaph's perspective was corrected when he went to the sanctuary of God and looked at things with an **eye on eternity** instead of the **temporary prosperity** of those who didn't know God.

2) Because God is the One who "adjusts our perspective" **regarding trials**. In vs 14, he complains about being "plagued all day long" and "chastened every morning." But after spending time with God, he called himself "foolish" and "ignorant" for accusing God of being unfair!

How can we have the right perspective on life and trials? **By focusing on the eternal!** And God had Paul write that very thing in **II Corinthians 4:16-18** "For which cause we faint not; but though our **outward man perish**, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction [trials], which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we **look not at the things which are seen**, but at the things **which are not seen**: for the things which **are seen are temporal**; but the things which are **not seen are eternal**." What are **some other reasons** it is good to draw near to God?

3) Because He is the One who will **guide us** with His counsel—meaning His Word—and afterward, receive us **to glory!**

4) And because He is our **portion forever!** And if God is **all we need** for all eternity, He certainly can provide all we need now in **this life!**

Asaph's **conclusion?** It is **good for me** to draw near to God! And that should be our conclusion, too!

Lastly, let's consider... B. Asaph's commitment

--**What** was Asaph's commitment? I don't think I'm going out on a limb to suggest that because Asaph believed it was **good to draw near** to God, **that** is what he **decided to do!**

Think about the word "draw." In this context, it obviously **doesn't mean** to "produce a picture by making lines and marks." It means to **come close to**—and to **spend time** with. And it is not just a **one-time** turning to God. It is **repeatedly** coming to Him; **returning to Him** over and over again.

--**How** we draw near to God?

In attitude, we come in a spirit of faith and humility. Isaiah 57:15 "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; **I dwell** in the high and holy place, **with him also** that is of a **contrite and humble spirit**, to revive the spirit of the **humble**, and to revive the heart of **the contrite ones**."

In practice, it takes a time—and place—to spend with God and commune "heart to heart" with Him. Ron Hamilton captures this thought well in the chorus of his song, "The Secret Place":

"I find hope; I find grace far away from the world's embrace.

He gives me rest; He keeps me safe; I find His strength; I seek His face...in the secret place."

What about you? Do we have a **secret place** where you go—often—to seek God's face? I believe Asaph had such a place—and we should, too! But there's **another commitment** we see Asaph making and it is this: "...**I have put my trust in the Lord God**..." Asaph didn't just commit to **drawing near** to God—he also

made a commitment **to put His trust in** God. What's the **difference!**

In a nutshell, I believe it is this: **drawing near** to God involves talking to Him and listening to Him; **putting our trust** in God involves obeying Him! The two certainly go hand-in-hand, but they **are different!** Trust in God helps us **handle** difficult things—like trials—but it also helps us **do difficult** things! Hebrews 11—what we fondly call the “Hall of Faith”—teaches us that **faith leads to obedience!**

--“By faith Noah...prepared an ark...” (Heb 11:7)

--"By faith Abraham offered up Isaac... (Heb 11:17)

--“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down” (Heb 11:30)—after they followed God’s specific instructions of marching around the city!

So putting our trust in God involves **obeying** what He tells us to do—even if it is **hard** and even if it **doesn't make sense** to us! What about you? Have you put your trust in the Lord God just to get **you through difficulties**—or do you also **trust Him enough to obey** what He tells you to do?

Asaph made a commitment to do both—to draw near to God and to put His trust in God. And God had it recorded for us because He wants us to do the same!

So what would God have us do in light of what we’ve heard this morning?

1. First and foremost, are you ready to stand before the God **of the Bible?**

--**Why** am I emphasizing the God **of the Bible?**

Because people have all kinds of ideas of what God is like—and choose to believe those things instead of what **God says about Himself!**

--**What** does God say about Himself?

--That He is holy—and just—and will judge us for every action...and attitude...and thought ...and word!

--He also says this about Himself: He is so perfect and pure that sin—and sinners—can’t dwell where He is!

“Pastor, you’re scaring me!” You **should be scared** because God also calls Himself a consuming fire!

But God provided a way for us to escape judgement! **How?** By judging **Someone** else instead of us.

--And that Someone else, of course, is Jesus!

--And that’s why Jesus is the Way—the Only Way—and no one gets to the Father except through Him!

But you need to **have** Jesus—you need to **possess** Him—not just know **about** Him.

2. But what about those that are God’s children? What would God have us do?

--Draw near to God. Spend time with Him.

--And show your trust in Him—and love for Him—by obeying Him!