

Asaph, the author of Psalm 73, was struggling with the justice of God. So do we! Like Asaph we also question God.

Why did my baby die?

J. Vernon McGee questioned God when his newly born baby girl died in the hospital. Just down the hospital hall was a wealthy couple whose baby lived. McGee looked out the hospital window and saw the new dad drive up in an expensive car with his friends and the champagne bottle. McGee said this about his daughter who did make it out of the hospital, "I only heard the cry of my little daughter. All she ever did was cry."

Why did I lose my job and my wicked co-worker got a promotion?

Asaph, the author was one of three ministers of music for King David, along with Heman and Ethan. It has been suggested that Asaph's faith was shaken when Absalom dethroned his father David which put Asaph on the unemployment list.

Why did my wife get cancer and my pagan neighbors are disease free?

When these questions plague our mind, how do we respond?

1. Not By Focusing on The Ungodly (73:1-16)

Asaph makes a powerful doctrinal statement in verse one, "God is good to Israel." This is like the corporate doctrinal statement we sign at our church to become members. In verse two, however, Asaph practices the opposite: "But as for me my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped." He was having difficulty practicing his beliefs. He is like a first time ice skater, he is about fall hard and get hurt.

Sometimes we think, "Yes, God answers prayers. He just isn't answering mine."

A. God is Good "But" the wicked prosper (3-12)

Asaph now elaborates on how the wicked get ahead:

1. The wicked are physically well in verse four
2. The wicked are problem free in verse five
3. The wicked are proud in verses six through nine
4. The wicked are popular in verses ten through eleven
5. The wicked are prosperous in verse twelve

One of my former teachers, John McCormick, once said: "There are few things that warp a person's judgment like self-pity. The very moment you begin to feel sorry for yourself, you minimize your blessings, and exaggerate the other person's blessings."

B. God is Good "But" the righteous suffer (13-16)

This is Asaph's response to the prosperity of the wicked. This is the low point in Asaph's Christian life. But Asaph is not alone in experiencing these thoughts.

Listen to a few more Old Testament examples:

Jeremiah in 12:1, "Wherefore does the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?"

Job in 21:7, "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yes, are mighty in power?"

Warren W. Wiersbe writes about blind George Matheson who at one point in his successful ministry had an eclipse of faith. He frankly told his problem to his church leaders and they wisely counseled him to wait and give God time. The blind preacher did wait, and God met him with new assurances and strength. George Matheson later wrote the hymn, "O, love that will not let me go."

Thankfully, Asaph did not vent these doubts with others who might also begin struggling with the justice of God (16-17). This was a step up in right direction. At least momentarily Asaph has his eyes off the wicked.

The response to the good life of the wicked is not focusing on their prosperity. Asaph goes to the house of God and discovers the right response.

2. By Focusing on God (73:17-28)

Asaph is struggling but making progress. Matthew Henry said, "The Psalmist got victory by degrees." What did Asaph learn in the house of God?

A. The wicked do always suffer ultimately (73:17-20)

When Asaph worshiped God he finally saw the justice of God and the final end of the wicked. They not only slip and fall, but God casts the wicked down into judgment. You can read the details in Revelation 20:11-15.

I can still remember the noose placed around Saddam Hussein's neck. His flushed expression was in stark contrast to his haughty look when he strutted through the streets of Baghdad firing an automatic rifle in defiance.

B. The righteous do always prosper ultimately (73:21-28)

Asaph reacts to this clear vision of the justice of God by repenting of his sins: bitterness, foolishness, and ignorance in verses 21-22.

Next Asaph no longer focuses on the material prosperity of the wicked but his spiritual prosperity:

The presence of God who with him. The hand of God who held him securely and guided him through life and afterwards into God's presence in heaven.

His greatest of all possessions: "Whom have I in heaven but you?"

Here is a very important question to ask and answer: "Why do I want to go to heaven?" "What is it in heaven that I long for?" If the answer is anything or anyone but God then we are guilty of idolatry.

Finally in the concluding verse, Asaph moves from believing in a sound corporate doctrinal statement to adhering to his own personal doctrinal statement: "But it is good for me to draw near to God." Before he was silent and did not voice his doubts, now he publically declares God's great works which have become his new focus.

Where are you today in your Christian journey? Are you bitter because you are always comparing your life with others? Confess that discontent with God's blessings in your life and start counting your blessings by numbering them one by one and see if it doesn't surprise you what the Lord has done.