

Have I Cleansed My Heart in Vain?

Compiled by Paul R. Blake

Introduction:

- A. Psalm 73:1-28
- B. John Godfrey Saxe wrote a poem based on an ancient India Hindu fable of six blind men who encountered an elephant for the first time.
 - 1. Our perspective often depends on where we stand and how much we can see
 - 2. Our perspective changes and our view extends much further when we see by faith

I. HOW ASAPH WAS EDUCATED

- A. Vs. 1 - On solid ground
 - 1. Matt. 19:17; Psalm 84:11; Matt. 6:33

II. WHAT ASAPH EXPERIENCED

- A. Vss. 2-16 - On slippery ground
 - 1. What he experienced in life seemed to contradict what he had learned about God. Confusion and doubt concerning God
 - 2. He misinterpreted the goodness of God. He thought that goodness translated into blessings.
 - 3. Did the goodness of God translate into blessings for Job?
 - 4. The "health and wealth gospel"; people have been lead to believe that if they live the right kind of lives and do the right things, then the Lord is obligated to bless them and give them good things.
- B. What confused Asaph?
 - 1. The prosperity of the sinner - Vs. 3
 - 2. The peace of the sinner - Vs. 4
 - 3. The pleasure of the sinner - Vs. 5
 - 4. The pride of the sinner - Vs. 6-11
 - a. Doesn't God see!?
 - b. Is God intimidated!?
 - 5. The progress of the sinner - Vs. 12-16
- C. When Asaph saw this, he became bitter.
 - 1. He looked at the life he had been living for the Lord - Vs. 13.
 - 2. He looked at his own share of sorrow - Vs. 14.
 - 3. He looked at a life lived for the Lord and it broke his heart - Vs. 16.
 - 4. Yet, he was afraid to admit how he felt, because he did not want to lead others down the same path of despair he was walking - Vs. 15
 - 5. When Asaph saw these things, he felt like he had wasted his time remaining pure and serving God.
- D. What kinds of questions do we ask under the circumstances?
 - 1. "What problems will I have to face next?"
 - 2. "Will I ever have relief?"
 - 3. "Does God or anyone care about what I am facing?"

4. When we look at life and its problems from a human perspective, we will always focus our attention on self.
5. Everything will always come down to, "How does this affect me?"

III. WHAT ASAPH ENCOUNTERED

- A. In verse 17, the mood of the Psalm changes. Asaph leaves the slippery ground of a human perspective and returns to the solid ground of a heavenly perspective. He went into the temple
 1. How many find their view changes when they look at life and problems from within the doors of the Lord's presence?
 2. The view changes when we look at it from within a gathering of the Lord's people, from the caring arm of an encouraging disciple, from our knees in prayer, after rising in the morning to a new day
 3. What did Asaph see from within the temple?
- B. The future of the sinner - Vs. 17-20
 1. What happens to the good life of the sinner when he breathes his last?
 - a. 2Thes. 1:8-9
 - b. At best, this is the only heaven they will know. Don't be jealous
- C. The foolishness of self - Vs. 21-22 - Asaph realized how poor his vision was
 1. It was all about looking at life the wrong way
 2. We have often been guilty of thinking:
 - a. God doesn't care, or He would help - 1Peter 5:7
 - b. God doesn't hear, or He would respond - Jer. 33:3
 - c. God isn't even there, or He would do something - Heb. 13:5
 3. God is still God no matter what we face in life - Eph. 3:20
 - a. Having trouble seeing that? Where are you standing?
- D. Now Asaph sees the fullness of God - Vs. 23-28
 1. The presence of God - Vs. 23 Asaph realized that even in the midst of his trials, he had never been alone. Even when he could not see God, the Lord had been holding to his hand.
 2. The protection of God - Vs. 24 - Asaph recognizes that even though the storms of life raged around him, his life was under the vigilant attention of God.
 3. The person of God - Vs. 25-26 Asaph comes to the conclusion that the Lord is all he needs in this life or in the life to come. He has forgotten about the pleasure filled lives of the wicked and names the greatest blessing that he enjoys: a good relationship with God
 - a. When we want nothing but God, we are sure to have everything we want - Matt. 5:6
 4. The perspective of God - Vs. 27-28 Asaph arrives at a level of spiritual maturity where he sees things the way God sees them.
 - a. How do we get to this place? By prayer, by the word of God, by fellowship with God's children, by faith, by worshiping God