

“Have I Cleansed My Heart in Vain?”

Psalm 73:1-28

“Have I Cleansed My Heart in Vain?”

- Our perspective often depends on where we stand and how much we can see
- Our perspective changes and our view extends much further when we see by faith

How Asaph Was Educated

- On solid ground
 - Psalm 73:1 - <<A Psalm of Asaph>> “Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart.”
 - Matt. 19:17 - “So He said to him, Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.”
 - Psalm 84:11 - “For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly.”
 - Matt. 6:33 - “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

What Asaph Experienced

- On slippery ground
 - Psalm 73:2-16
 - Psalm 73:2 - “But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped.”
 - What he experienced in life seemed to contradict what he had learned about God.
 - He misinterpreted the goodness of God. He thought that goodness translated into blessings.

What Asaph Experienced

- What confused Asaph?
 - The prosperity of the sinner
 - Psalm 73:3 - “For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”
 - The peace of the sinner
 - Psalm 73:4 - “For there are no pangs in their death, But their strength is firm.”
 - The pleasure of the sinner
 - Psalm 73:5 - “They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like other men.”

What Asaph Experienced

- What confused Asaph?
 - The pride of the sinner
 - Psalm 73:6-11 - “Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them like a garment. 7 Their eyes bulge with abundance; They have more than heart could wish. 8 They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; They speak loftily. 9 They set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue walks through the earth. 10 Therefore his people return here, And waters of a full cup are drained by them. 11 And they say, How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?”

What Asaph Experienced

- What confused Asaph?
 - The progress of the sinner
 - Psalm 73:12 - “Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches.”

What Asaph Experienced

- When Asaph saw this, he became bitter.
 - He looked at the life he had been living for the Lord
 - Psalm 73:13 - “Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence.”
 - He looked at his own share of sorrow
 - Psalm 73:14 - “For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning.”
 - He looked at the life he lived for the Lord and it broke his heart
 - Psalm 73:16 - “When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me”

What Asaph Experienced

- When Asaph saw these things, he felt like he had wasted his time remaining pure and serving God.
- Yet, he was afraid to admit how he felt out loud, because he did not want to lead others down the same path of despair he was walking
 - Psalm 73:15 - “If I had said, I will speak thus, Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children.”

What Asaph Experienced

- What kinds of questions do we ask under hard circumstances?
 - “What problems will I have to face next?”
 - “Will I ever have relief?”
 - “Does God or anyone else care about what I am facing?”
- When we look at life and its problems from a human perspective, we will always focus our attention on self.
 - Everything will always come down to, “How does this affect me?”

What Asaph Encountered

- In Psalm 73:17, Asaph leaves the slippery ground of a human perspective and returns to the solid ground of a heavenly perspective. He went into the temple
 - Psalm 73:17 - “Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end.”

What Asaph Encountered

- How many find their view changes when they look at life and problems from within the doors of the Lord's presence?
- 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, or after rising in the morning to a new day

What Asaph Encountered

- What did Asaph see from within the temple?
 - The future of the sinner
 - Psalm 73:17b-20 - "... Then I understood their end. 18 Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. 19 Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. 20 As a dream when one awakes, So, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image."

What Asaph Encountered

- What happens to the good life of the sinner when he breathes his last?
 - 2Thes. 1:8-9 - “in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power”

What Asaph Encountered

- What did Asaph see from within the temple?
 - The foolishness of self
 - Psalm 73:21-22 - “Thus my heart was grieved, And I was vexed in my mind. 22 I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.”
 - Asaph realized how poor his vision was. It was all about looking at life the wrong way

What Asaph Encountered

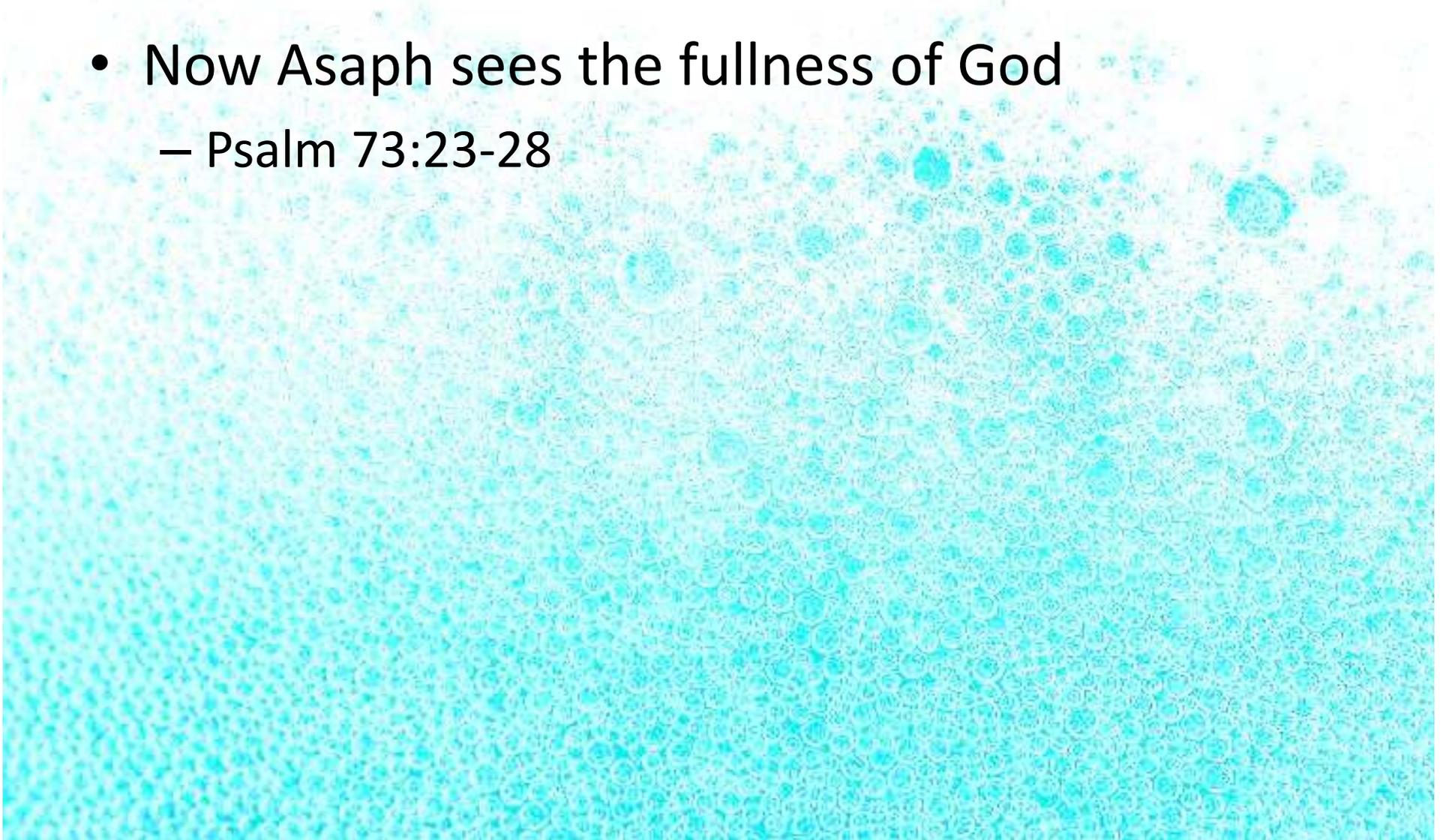
- We have often been guilty of thinking:
 - God doesn't care, or He would help
 - 1Peter 5:7 - “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you”
 - God doesn't hear, or He would respond
 - Jer. 33:3 - “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”
 - God isn't even there, or He would do something
 - Heb. 13:5 - “be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

What Asaph Encountered

- God is still God no matter what we face in life
 - Eph. 3:20 - “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us”
- Having trouble seeing that? Where are you standing?

What Asaph Encountered

- Now Asaph sees the fullness of God
 - Psalm 73:23-28



What Asaph Encountered

- The presence of God
 - Psalm 73:23 - “Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand.”
 - 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.

What Asaph Encountered

- The protection of God
 - Psalm 73:24 - “You will guide me with Your counsel, And afterward receive me to glory”
 - Asaph recognizes that even though the storms of life raged around him, his life was under the vigilant attention of God.

What Asaph Encountered

- The person of God
 - Psalm 73:25-26 - “Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. 26 My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”
 - Asaph comes to the conclusion that the Lord is all he needs in this life or in the life to come
- When we want nothing but God, we are sure to have everything we want
 - Matt. 5:6 - “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.”

What Asaph Encountered

- The perspective of God
 - Psalm 73:27-28 - “For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry. 28 But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, That I may declare all Your works.”
 - Asaph arrives at a level of spiritual maturity where he sees things the way God sees them

What Asaph Encountered

- 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