

“You can’t win an argument with a customer”

- What does that mean?

Sometimes an apparent win hides an actual loss

- When might that happen in life?

Sometimes an apparent loss hides an actual win

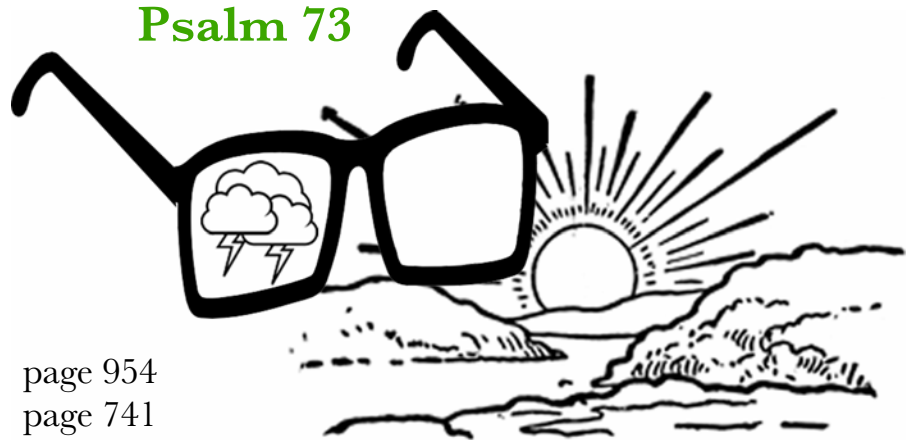
- When might that happen in life?

Sometimes what we see in life
is the opposite of our deeper reality

Pray: Help us to see what is really real

Awakening to Reality

Psalm 73



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Setting

- Asaph was among the “professional” worship leaders
 - “David appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, to extol, thank, and praise the Lord, the God of Israel: Asaph was the chief.” *1 Chronicles 16:4-5*
- Writer and leader of worship ‘liturgy’ (songs & services)
 - Psalm 50, 73-83
- He had a crisis that he couldn’t tell the people about until it was over...

Psalm 73

- 1-3:** God is good, yet those who are against Him prosper
- 4-12: • The problem
- 13-16: • Sometimes, people who were genuinely seeking God
- 17: experienced much trouble
- 18-20: While people who lived apart from God
- 21-26: (or even against God) prospered
- 27-28: • The worship leader envied the life of people who were far from God
- Seeking God was hard, costly work, and it wasn’t improving his circumstances
 - He almost rejected God

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Psalm 73

1-3: God is good, yet those who are against Him prosper

4-12: Those who were far from God had an easy life

13-16: • v7: being fat was a sign of blessing and wealth

17: • Pride: no need for God

18-20: • Violence: forcefully self-serving (even if no

21-26: bloodshed)

27-28: • v10-11: Possibly “his people turn back”

- God’s people are led astray by these wealthy people who were far from God

- And Asaph was tempted to join them!

Psalm 73

1-3: God is good, yet those who are against Him prosper

4-12: Those who were far from God had an easy life

13-16: Following God made life worse, not better

17: • Struggle to obey God hadn’t helped

18-20: • Perhaps pursuing a “pure heart” means:

21-26: • Trusting God in trouble

27-28: • Blessing those who curse

- “Rooting out” sin in our hearts

- Difference between pain and suffering

- Mental turmoil: it shouldn’t be this way!

- Couldn’t express his turmoil (as worship leader)

Psalm 73

1-3: God is good, yet those who are against Him prosper

4-12: Those who were far from God had an easy life

13-16: Following God has made life worse, not better!

17: When Asaph encountered God, his eyes were opened

18-20: • “Conviction” of the Holy Spirit

21-26: • Being able to see and believe the deeper reality

27-28: that human circumstances had hidden

- The goodness of God’s ways, and the horrible tragedy of going against Him, can only really be seen when you can see the outcome

Psalm 73

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4-12: Those who were far from God had an easy life

13-16: Following God has made life worse, not better!

17: When Asaph encountered God, his eyes were opened

18-20: Prosperity apart from God is temporary, like a dream

21-26: • Now Asaph spoke to God, not about Him

27-28: • Like a “dream” and “fantasies”, their prosperity had no substance that endured

- On slippery ground, their high place (prosperity) was only temporary

Psalm 73

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4-12: Those who were far from God had an easy life

13-16: Following God has made life worse, not better!

17: When Asaph encountered God, his eyes were opened

18-20: Prosperity apart from God is temporary, like a dream

21-26: God is the strength of those who seek Him

27-28: • “You hold my right hand” =
you kept me from falling

- God is worth more than anything else anywhere!
- “My flesh and my heart may fail, **but God...**”
 - Even when I can’t hold on, God holds on to me!

Psalm 73

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4-12: Those who were far from God had an easy life

13-16: Following God has made life worse, not better!

17: When Asaph encountered God, his eyes were opened

18-20: Prosperity apart from God is temporary, like a dream

21-26: God is the strength of those who seek Him

27-28: God is my refuge, and He is good forever!

- Those who are “far from God” will perish
- Key claim: “It is good to be near God”
- Now he can speak and tell of God’s glory
 - Faith on the other side of struggle

What changed?

Beginning of the psalm: Asaph was in crisis, almost giving up on following God

End of psalm: Asaph was ready to joyfully proclaim God's wonderful deeds

What changed?

- Not the circumstances
- Asaph's perspective and what he could "see" in the world
- What did he see?

The Big Idea

True prosperity

is being near to God in His grace

which we can only see

when we are near to God

Sometimes what we see in life is very problematic



**Sometimes what we see in life is very problematic
But maybe our circumstances are like wearing bad glasses**



**Sometimes what we see in life is very problematic
But maybe our circumstances are like wearing bad glasses
That prevent us from seeing
the deeper reality**



The Big Idea

True prosperity

is being near to God in His grace

which we can only see

when we are near to God

Application

Inner being: Head & Heart **Action: Hands**

Application

Inner being: Head & Heart **Action: Hands**

- Become convinced:
true prosperity is being near to God in His grace
 - Human circumstances can hide this reality
 - This life is temporary Eternal life is forever
 - This life is the shadow Eternal life is the substance
 - “For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” *1 Corinthians 13:12*
 - Jesus said: “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest” *John 18:36*

Application

Inner being: Head & Heart

Action: Hands

- Become convinced:
 - true prosperity is being near to God in His grace
 - “True goodness is not prosperity but the presence of God”
 - One day in Christ we will experience the wonderful goodness of God’s presence completely and forever!
 - We cannot live well in this life without understanding the deeper reality of our lives in God’s presence
 - Practice redirecting our hearts to see this deeper reality
 - How?

Application

Inner being: Head & Heart

Action: Hands

- Regularly enter the presence of God
 - This builds the conviction of the reality of our eternal lives
 - Individually: personal times of prayer and worship, and faith filled obedience
 - As a church: worship and obey together
- Lead others into the presence of God
 - Recognize the great danger of complaining and cynicism
 - It leads people **away** from God’s presence
 - Proclaim God’s goodness to each other
 - The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases!
 - He is faithful and true!

The Big Idea

True prosperity
is being near to God in His grace
which we can only see
when we are near to God

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

Psalm 73:26