

Let's Visit

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An Ancient Saint and Doubt

Psalm 73 alone with Psalm 37 and Psalm 49 form a trilogy. There is a perennial problem grappled with in all of these Psalms. That is reconciling God's moral government with observed facts. How can an all powerful God be good and yet allow the wicked to prosper and the righteous to go unrewarded.

Psalm 73 and verses 2 and 3 read this way in the New Century Version, *"But I had almost stopped believing. I had almost lost my faith, because I was jealous of proud people. I saw wicked people doing well."*

The passage tells how the prosperity of the godless, in apparent flat contradiction of Divine promises had all but swept the Psalmist from his faith. It tells how he was led, through doubt and struggle, to closer communion with God. Communion in which he learned not only the gradually vanishing nature of the external well-being which puzzled him so much, but he also learned the eternity of the true blessedness belonging to the godly.

Psalm 73 tells us that faith has had a fight and faith has won. Let's be honest. Doubt plays a larger part in our lives than we want to admit. Yet, as this Psalm shows, it can have a beneficial effect. That is, if it becomes the means to a good end. Doubt can have true value in our lives. That is, if it clears away and stimulates a search for truth.

The Psalmist reveals for us the depth of his doubt. He had almost lost his footing in the matter of his faith. The disparity between belief and reality led the writer to doubt his faith. He called into question the goodness of God. He had almost concluded that righteousness is in vain. That it goes

unrewarded and the righteous suffer untold hardships. If this is so, how can God be Good?

In verse 14 we read that he had reached the depths of self-pity. Self-pity tends to exaggerate our problems. It feeds on itself. It weakens the fabric of faith and is the mark of spiritual immaturity. Self-pity and spiritual growth move in opposite directions.

We see that the writer had sunk to the level of a beast. He writes in Psalm 73:22, *"I was senseless and stupid. I acted like an animal toward you."* (NCV) Literally he is saying, "So soured, so embittered was I and without understanding, I was as a plumed colossus of flesh before thee." Perhaps as one commentator put it this must surely mean the hippopotamus, an emblem of colossal stupidity.

What are the sources of his doubt? He confesses that he was envious of the wicked and tells us why. He saw their prosperity and there were no pangs in their death. They are free of pain and trouble and they are not troubled and plagued. He saw that pride was as a chain ornament about their neck and that injustice and cruelty seem to be their very clothing.

Yet, his observations are superficial, for actual experience does not bear them out. You see, he is not seeing the big picture. Instead of viewing a panorama, he is looking at a snapshot. Instead of
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In Search Of The Lord's Way



Tune in to this Television Ministry
KSLA 12 – Shreveport -7:30 a.m. Sunday
DISH channel 239-6:00 a.m. Sunday
DIRECT TV channel 307 -6:00 a.m. Sunday

Gathered Here and There



Today's Sermon

"Help My Unbelief"

Our text comes from Mark 9:24. The disciples of Jesus had failed to heal this man's son. He told Jesus, "I believe, help thou my unbelief"

FOR THE PANTRY....

Dried Pasta

An Ancient Saint and Doubt – continued from page 1

hearing the whole interview, he is listening to a 30 second sound bite.

He is showing us his tendency to generalize from only a few examples. Our own tendency to generalize is one of our more prevalent human failings. If we try to be true to God and suffer heartbreak and misfortune, while it appears that the godless prosper and are free from suffering, we ought not to generalize. We need to see the big picture.

Looking back, the Psalmist admitted his failure to reconcile God's way and the seeming good fortune of the wicked. He tells us in verse 17, it was when he "went into the sanctuary of God, then I understood their end".

The Psalmist went down into the depths. He passed through the fire and yet he ended on a high note. What saw him through? For one thing, he had a concern not to injure the faith of others. No doubt, his first reaction was to use his teaching office to tell his doubts to others. He was dissuaded from this by his concern for others.

He realized that he was a man and not God. There are some problems the human intellect cannot solve. God's moral government of the universe is too weighty for man's weak powers. The subject was above the reach of the Psalmist.

We read of his experience with God in the sanctuary in verses 16 and 17. The biblical way of facing problems is to take them into the presence of God. The prophet Habakkuk in the long ago faced essentially the same problem. He saw the wicked swallowing up a man more righteous than he. He solved his problem by seeking the presence of God.

The Psalmist used his God-given grace to take the long look and see the wicked as God sees them. When he did this, he saw things he had not seen before. He saw it was the wicked in the slippery places, not the saints. He saw the law of retribution does work for the wicked here and now.

We learn from this the joy of a mature faith. A mature faith is one that has come out of the fire. A faith God can only give to those who have brought their doubts and problems to him. This maturing of faith brought several realizations to the Psalmist.

He realized the abiding presence of God. Out of the clouds of doubt, his soul now came into the sunlight of glad certainty. He realized the assurance of God's counsel and the hope of eternal life.

For the Psalmist, all the heaven he wanted was God. We see in verse 28 the faith and confidence of his final benediction. "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 thy works" Our faith and our trust must be in God.

tp

On The Lighter Side....



BEST .. SERMON .. EVER

Miscellaneous



Those To Remember In Prayer

COVERED DISH LUNCHEON!

TODAY!



Plan to stay and have
a wonderful time of
fellowship!

Did You Notice The Shrubs?

Did you happen to notice the neatly trimmed shrubs in front of the building as you drove up or walked in this morning? If you didn't be sure and take a look before you leave and say thank you to Mike and Jana O'Brien (and Jameson!) for their hard work yesterday trimming them. They look great and make the front of our building look so much better.



THOSE WITH ONGOING NEEDS:

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Roxie Bostick , Gene Bradshaw, Martha Jean Golden, Sue Hagler, Alice Hall, Ted and Joyce Holt, Betty Miller, Debra Pate, Jerry Pate, Wayne Sims, Melvin Williams

"EXTENDED FAMILY" AND FRIENDS

Donna Boullion (Ted and Joyce Holt's niece)
Cody Butler (Debra Pate's grandson) Paul Cocklin (co-worker of Norma Perkins) Sharon Connot (friend of the Perkins') Peyton Cook (Betty Miller's great-granddaughter) B. B. Cox (recovering from Heart Surgery) Gracie Elam (6 month old baby recovering from heart surgery) Keeth Fontenot (Debra Pate's son) undergoing tests for s suspicious know on his neck Dalton Hendrix (Joyce Holt's great-great nephew) Lamar McCormick (friend of Sarah Fletcher, multiple health issues) Calvin Smith (Debra Pate's uncle) heart and blood pressure issues; Jared and Natalie Tate (Mike and Roxie's son and daughter-in-law) Pat Tate (Jana O'Brien's mother) Jo Windham (Betty Miller's sister-in-law)

THOSE IN THE MILITARY AND FOREIGN SERVICE

Amanda Bradshaw, Leland Bradshaw, Lucas Tate

If you want someone added to the prayer list, please fill out a card and put it in the offering plate.

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SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS

9:45 a.m.

"Paul's Prison Epistles - Colossians"

Mid-Week Bible Study

7:00 p.m. Wednesday Evening

"The One Word Bible Study"

Please come and join us in these
weekly activities.



Across The Preacher's Desk

Did you ever wake up early Sunday morning, the neighbors are all in bed, the streets are quiet and the yards are empty? The world is asleep as you prepare for worship on the Lord's day. That's what you get for being a Christian.

Did you ever leave dishes in the sink, a blouse un-ironed and the floors un-swept to visit a sick friend or run an errand for someone confined to home? That's what you get for being a Christian.

Did you ever say no to a social gathering for all day on the Lord's Day? That's what you get for being a Christian.

Did you ever work with a group of people who use profanity, live loose lives morally who think you are strange because you are a Christian and not like they are?

All of that is what you get for being a Christian. Yet, think what is yours for being a Christian:

You are a child of the King.

You are loved and cared for.

You have a peace and happiness the world does not know and cannot take away.

You shall inherit eternal life.

You have a Father to whom you can take all your unresolved problems. A Father who abolishes fear and doubt.

All of those things are yours when you become a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, living His kind of life, His way.

it's something to think about. . . .tbp

**Commitment
Builds
Great
Churches!**