

Sermon outline notes: Psalm 73 Dealing with Doubt

Introduction

Biblical Faith is not blind! It has to look at the realities of life and deal with them. In this psalm we have a first hand account of man who had to face doubt; doubt arising from the contradiction he saw between theological theory and observed fact.

The Problem Stated

- The theory is stated in verse 1, but as he looked around his world he observed that the evidence was to the contrary– it was the wicked who were prospering.
- There's a note of cynicism and bitterness flowing through verses 3-11. It's not 'acts of God' but the 'acts of men' that led to his doubts.
- Why did this problem arise? Because the psalmist personally started to suffer. Before the problem had been academic and impersonal. "The smallest pain in my little finger causes more mental concern in me than the destruction of thousands of my fellow man." Haslett.
- The psalmist talks openly and honestly to God about his troubled thoughts and this psalm is in the Bible to encourage us to do the same.

The Solution he Discovered.

- Notice that his mind 'began to clear' when he found himself in the Temple in the experience of worship (v 17).
- He first discovered a new perspective on human destiny. Worship is an exercise in God centred thinking and it's only when we see things as God sees them that we have a true perspective. Once he got these wicked men in heavens perspective their destiny looked altogether different (v18-20).
- Secondly he saw the sulkiness of his own behaviour! He had envied the arrogant. Yet he was still a child of God and he realised that his faith was real, and that faith was as much a real part of his life as those doubts that were troubling him.
- Thirdly coming to the Temple to worship gave him a true perspective on what are real values (v 25-26,28).

The psalmist redefines the word 'good'. Good is not about prosperity, popularity, health etc. It's about relationship with the living God- 'it is good to be near God'.

Conclusion

The psalmist had once again found 'a pearl of great price' for which a person sells all they have. He discerned the beauty of that pearl of great price when he came into God's presence to worship, and in the light of that beauty his envy about the prosperity of the wicked dissolved away. He got everything back into perspective.

Points to Ponder

- 1) Share first reactions to the sermon.
- 2) What is the difference between doubt and unbelief? Have you ever felt like the psalmist felt in verses 15-16 when he says he felt unable to express those doubts as it would have betrayed the community of believers. Could you express those doubts now in your group?
- 3) Judgement—"All that hell fire, damnation and judgement stuff is just old wives tales". How would you answer such a statement? How much does knowing that the wicked will be judged in the future help you deal with wickedness in the here and now?
- 4) 'So often it is not our social consciences that is outraged, it is our envy that has been inflamed. I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked says the psalmist. Is this a good summing up of all human beings? What kind of prayer can we pray to seek a different perspective.
- 5) Read aloud verses 23-28 and spend a few minutes meditating upon them.