

WHY ME? HELP AND HOPE FOR THE HURTING: FACTOR TWO

We Reap What We Sow – The Consequence/Chapter Four: The Final Destiny

The inequities and disparities of life caused King Solomon to become philosophical. On the other hand, they caused Asaph, the chief musician of King David, to become downright resentful. To his credit, in spite of his time of struggling with these issues, Asaph arrived at the same conclusion as Solomon. The entire process is recorded in Psalm 73, providing us with powerful insight into the reap/sow dynamic in the here and now, as well as the hereafter.

In Psalm 73:1-9, Asaph admits that he became envious of those whom he felt didn't deserve to prosper. He says so in v3: *"For I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked."* Making matters worse, Asaph's envy is coupled with his own adversity, revealed in v14: *"For I have been stricken all day long and chastened every morning."* This burdensome combination leads Asaph to a bitter conclusion in v13: *"Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence."* During the worst point of his struggle, he becomes convinced that living for God isn't worth it. The reason? People who deserve to suffer, don't. People who don't deserve to suffer, do! God's moral universe seems to be broken, with no apparent attempts by God to fix it, which causes Asaph to doubt God's goodness.

Yet, if we fast forward to the end of the psalm, vv25-28 indicate that Asaph had undergone a radical transformation. He desires nothing else but God Himself (v25). He views God as being his sole and eternal source of strength (v26). There is not even one ounce of envy residing within his heart toward the prosperity of the wicked (v27). He is no longer plagued with uncertainty about the goodness of God. Asaph is so overwhelmingly convinced about the positive nature of God's character, that he not only sees God as his own personal and intimate refuge, but desires to tell the whole world about how good God really is (v28). This is why, in the aftermath of his breakthrough, he begins Psalm 73 with the declaration: *"Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart!"* What was this epiphany that caused Asaph's positive about-face? The psalmist states it forcefully in vv16-20 –

"When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight. Until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end. Surely you set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors! Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form."

As Asaph sincerely seeks a resolution to his conflict, indicated by his entrance into the sanctuary of God, he comes in touch with an eternal reality. He understands that even though the wicked can and do turn the reap/sow dynamic on its ear in this life, there is a **final destiny** awaiting them where no such subversion of justice is possible. Asaph states the case succinctly in v17b: *"Then I perceived their end."* Asaph lacked perspective in regard to eternity. He developed a narrow focus on his personal problems that was marked by self-pity, and looked upon the prosperity of the wicked with envy. All of the above caused him to be temporarily void of any spiritual sanity. He goes so far as to compare himself to a "beast" during this embittered period in his life (vv21-22). But to his credit, Asaph didn't remain there and neither should we.