

A Lesson For Our Times

By Richard Jordan

Asaph was a great man of God, one of the leaders of David's choir at Jerusalem. He wrote twelve Psalms, two of which point to the path of victory for believers in every age.

PSALM 77

In this Psalm we see Asaph looking *within* himself—as thousands are exhorted to do today. As he engaged in his course of introspection he was quite thorough:

“I cried unto God with my voice, *even* unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me.
“In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.
“I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah.
“Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
“I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search” (Psalm 77:1-4,6).

And what was the outcome of all this self-examination? Did he find the inner peace and release he desired? Judge for yourself as he goes on to ask:

“Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more?
“Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth *his* promise fail for evermore?
“Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah” (verses 7-9).

Indeed, here is a soul sunk deep in the *misery* which always results from *self-occupation*—from beholding one's own self. Asaph, however, goes on to discover what the saints of all ages must learn to be the only remedy for such a condition:

“And I said, This *is* my infirmity: *but I will remember* the years of the right hand of the most High.
“I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.
“I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.
“Thy way, O God, *is* in the sanctuary: who *is so* great a God as *our* God?
“Thou *art* the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people.
“Thou hast with *thine* arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah” (verses 10-15).

Here is the path of *true* peace and happiness! Misery was the result of Asaph's introspection—and it will ever be so, for what is there within any of us to cause us the slightest satisfaction? Rather, it is as we behold what God has done—“His workmanship”—that true joy is to be found.

PSALM 73

Here Asaph is looking, not within, but *around*. He is no longer looking at self; now he looks *to others*. He begins:

“Truly God *is* good to Israel, *even* to such as are of a clean heart” (Psalm 73:1).

He is looking away from himself, surely, but not far enough! And the inevitable result of looking at others—especially at those who seem to be “more advanced” follows.

“But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.

“For I was envious at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

“For *there are* no bands in their death: but their strength *is* firm.

“They *are* not in trouble *as other* men; neither are they plagued like *other* men.

“Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.

“Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches” (verses 2-5, 7, 12).

As Asaph sees “the prosperity of the wicked” he is *distracted* and perplexed. The result of this mistaken occupation is then exhibited:

“Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocence.

“For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.

“If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children” (verses 13-15).

Now comes the turning point.

“When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me;

“Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end.

“Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.

“So foolish *was* I, and ignorant: I was *as* a beast before thee” (verses 16,17, 21,22).

Finally, Asaph has come into the light! In the “sanctuary” all is made clear—as it was in the previous case (Psalm 77:13). The presence of God has set all right, and in looking to Him he is “lightened” (Psalm 34:5).

Asaph gives up all other occupation and beholds only God. Thus he is able to say:

“Nevertheless I *am* continually with thee: thou hast holden *me* by my right hand.

“Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me *to* glory.

“Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire beside thee.

“My flesh and my heart faileth: *but* God *is* the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (Psalm 73:23-26).

This is truly a blessed height to reach! And having reached this “higher ground,” he travels on to the end and tells us of his happy experiences, summing it up in these words:

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” (verse 28).

Here is the end of the whole matter—for Asaph and for us. And what is it? Simply that there is nothing in ourselves or others—only God Himself and what He has done.

If you want to be *miserable*—look *within*.

If you want to be distracted—look *around*.

If you want to be truly *happy*—look up to *Him*.

The key to an effective Christian walk is to be occupied with Christ and with all that God has made us in Him. This is why Paul exhorted the Thessalonians to “stand fast in the Lord” (I Thessalonians 3:8). He was well aware that only as they by faith occupied themselves with Christ, standing firmly in the position God had given them “in Him” that they could and would have victory.

Just so, my Christian friend, as you occupy *your heart* with God and with the standing He has given you in Christ, we do not hesitate to say that the thrill and wonder of it will cause your “walk” to fall in line!

Calvary is the secret of the Christian life: Our faith standing on the facts of Calvary gives the Holy Spirit the freedom to bring that finished work into our daily lives. As we *by faith* accept as true, literally, absolutely and instantly, our perfect place in Christ we are thus led to recognize as *unworthy of our present actual character* both our old self and all its workings.

As you read these lines, if you have not as yet looked away from self, beyond others and trusted exclusively in Christ who died for you—do it without delay!