

#80 “Life Is Not Fair But God Is”

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One of the most frustrating but necessary lessons that we each must learn in our Christian walks is that life is not fair but God is. In order to make sense of the very real prosperity and ease that the wicked can and do experience in this life, we must come to have an eternal perspective. Surely, we have all sensed frustration and maybe even grew bitter for a time when we saw someone get away with wrong. How irritating it is when justice is not served and the righteous suffer when in fact it should have been the wicked who were dealt the blow of justice. Yet, it is not always the case in this life and in this very fallen and imperfect world in which we live that justice is always served. Sometimes, life is not fair, and justice is not served. This is not how it should be, and it is not what a society should seek. However, unfairness and injustice does happen. The key for us as believers is how we respond to such situations. Of course, we should do our part to stand for truth and justice, but sometimes our calls, prayers, and petitions will go unheeded. Sometimes the wicked "get away with" their sin, at least in this life. So then what?

A very transparent portrayal of this internal struggle about holiness not necessarily leading to fairness and just retribution in this life is given in Psalm 73 by Asaph. Asaph knew the truth of God's Word as he said in verse 1: "Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart!" This is truth that he has heard, written songs about, and thanked God for over and over again. He knows it is true, yet his experience is causing him to doubt God's Word. What he sees, feels, and observes doesn't necessarily correlate with his experience of witnessing the wicked prosper. After all, how could God be good if Israel suffers and the wicked nations triumph? How could God allow these things? Asaph had a heart for God, and it bothered him deeply that there seemed to be a lack of fairness in this world. In fact, this particular dilemma of the wicked prospering nearly caused him to begin vocalizing his doubt to others in Israel and thereby leading them into distrust of God also (v. 15). He says that his feet came close to stumbling (v. 2) because of his envy of the wicked (v. 3). This is so important: if we think that all on this earth must work out fairly while we are yet on this earth, we will be severely tempted to start envying the wicked to the extent that we might even start living as they live. Doubt leads to envy which leads to disobedience and to unfaithfulness. When Asaph thought merely temporally and not eternally, he grew greatly frustrated. He says in verse 12 and 13, "Behold, these are the wicked; and always at ease, they have increased in wealth. Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence." Asaph also speaks of suffering and even undergoing divine discipline of God (v. 14). Being a man of faith was tough, and it bothered him that all of God's refining work in his heart and life didn't lead to more material blessing and ease as the wicked experienced. His obedience before God felt like a wasted effort. When his focus was on evil people doing evil things rather than upon the God of justice and the God Who loves His people relentlessly, Asaph's heart sunk. He grew depressed, bitter, and angry (v. 21). But there was a turning point, an answer.

Asaph entered the sanctuary of God (v. 17). He may or may not have literally gone to the temple, but the point is that he came to rest in God's promises, God's sovereignty, and God's heart. God is good and just, and the only hope for Asaph and for us to be at peace despite the injustice all around us is to 1) do what we can to be and promote justice but more importantly 2) trust God to make all things just, fair, and right in the end. Romans 2:6 says that God "WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS." Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." We have got to remember that this life is incredibly short when contrasted with eternity. In the end, all that we do here and now matters because God sees all and will render to each of us according to our deeds. Those who trust Christ for salvation will be rewarded on the basis of their faithfulness, while those who reject Christ will face the Great White Throne judgment where their evil deeds will condemn them to eternity in the lake of fire. Asaph's troubles and struggles with perceived unfairness and very real injustice in the short term were finally put to rest when he perceived the end of the wicked (v. 17). God will deal with them and hold them to account for all of their evil deeds because God is just. He is just to forgive those who seek redemption and just to punish those who reject it. In the meantime, we have no reason to doubt, envy, or become embittered. We have our God, the God of justice, near to us, and such is our good (v. 28). Rather than envying the wicked, we need to tell them of all of the wonders of our good and just God (v. 28). Our hope is our eternal glory with Christ in heaven (v. 24), and to get all worked up about the ease of the wicked is just plain senseless given their ultimate end (v. 22). Let us not be ignorant but remember that the eternal judgment of God is altogether fair.