

Title: Truly God is Good to Israel

Text: Psalm 73: 1-28

Date: June 7, 2012

Place: SGBC, New Jersey

When our life becomes Christ, so that the riches of this world are no profit to us, then the prosperity of the wicked ceases to be something we envy. When our life becomes Christ, from which nothing we suffer can take nothing away then our sicknesses and losses become bearable to us. God writes this maxim on our hearts.

**Psalm 73: 1: «A Psalm of Asaph.» Truly God is good to Israel, *even to such as are of a clean heart.***

Truly God is good to those he chose in Christ from before the foundation of the world. Truly God is good to those he has washed in the blood of his dear Son. Truly God is good to us whom he has created anew and given a clean heart by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Though God may cause the wicked to prosper and his own people to suffer much affliction in this life, remember brethren, **truly God is good to us.** We may not understand what God is doing in the world around us, still, truly God is good to work all things together for our good according to his everlasting purpose of grace. Good to sustain us by his grace and keep us and good to glorify his great name and to give his glory hereafter.

**Proposition:** And truly, God is good to continually wash us and create in us a clean heart to turn our eye from the world of the wicked to Christ in glory so that we can say with the psalmist, Truly God is good to us. I am glad because sadly, believers sometimes foolishly do what the psalmist describes here.

**I. WE LOOK IN THE WRONG DIRECTION WHEN WE JUDGE BY OUTWARD APPEARANCE.**

**Psalm 73: 2: But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. 3: For I was envious at the foolish, *when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.***

We cannot judge God's goodness toward us by looking at the prosperity of the wicked and our base condition. We will surely become tripped up and the fleshly man of our old nature will envy. This was the temptation by which David almost fell.

He saw that the wicked often die as they live.

**Psalm 73: 4: For *there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm.*** The wicked often live without sickness and die of old age in a very peaceful way. **5: They *are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.*** The saints enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation. But wicked men often live and die without being plagued with trials, without distresses of sin or afflictions of conscious.

**Application:** Believer, God chastens those he loves. By sickness, God shows us we have no strength. By afflictions, God show us our frailty and the shortness of this life. By not giving us riches, he keeps us dependent upon his grace. Let's not regard our sufferings with bitterness but as **sweet bands of God's grace, which keep us bound to Christ.** Else we would be like the wicked who live and die apart from God in the ease of wickedness.

He saw the wicked full of pride and prospering in their deceit.

**Psalm 73: 6: Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain;** They wear their pride as if it were like their gold chains, as adornment. But their pride is really a slave's chain which binds them. **6:...violence covereth them as a garment.** Their cut-throat dealings and profiting at others expense covers them like their expensive garments. **7: Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.** They have more than the heart could wish yet not as much as they their covetous hearts wish for. A covetous heart is never satisfied with what it has, but as fat as their eyes bulge out by what they have, so their eyes bulge out coveting more.

**Application:** God hates pride and oppression and covetousness. That which is of great price and highly esteemed by God is **the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Contentment with godliness is great gain.** It is better to have none of this world's riches in our hands and the love of God in our hearts than to be full of this world and have not the Spirit of God within.

He saw the wicked boasting of their own righteousness.

**Psalm 37: 8: They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily.** While they themselves deal corruptly, they condemn others for the same oppression: they speak loftily, they justify themselves as not being like others who do the same. **9: They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.** They speak against God's condemnation of their own evil as if God is pleased with them, while at the same time with the same tongue, they condemn other men in the earth for the same offenses.

He saw the wicked prosper in leading many astray.

**Psalm 73: 10: Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.** Concerning those who are wicked in a secular sense only. By looking on the outward appearance of prosperity and strength and health, in comparison to their own poverty and weakness and afflictions, many forsake the right way and become worldly like the wicked men they admire. **Waters of a full cup are wrung out to them**—they often receive plenty of good things in this life. **Psalm 73: 11: And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?** They may own there is a God, even acknowledge God to be the most High. But they question his knowledge in overruling of men on the earth.

Concerning those who use religion for their wickedness. They, too, by appearing outwardly righteous, by appearing to hate wickedness, by appearing prosperous, in comparison with the lowly state of God's assembly, cause many to forsake the right way, assuming God is blessing those whom God has not blessed. As Peter puts it,

2 Peter 2: 18: For when they speak great swelling *words* of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, *through much* wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

And **waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.** They too often receive plenty of good things. Wicked men flatter them. Their cup appears to run over. They appear to have great ease the rest of their days.

**Psalm 73: 11: And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?** In word, in doctrine, in letter, in creed, they would not dare deny Christ is the Head of the church and sovereign to govern all things by the word of his power. But by their works, of joining the crafty, by looking to what they deem as better means than the gospel of Christ and him crucified, by their works they deny Christ's Wisdom and governing power of his church. David saw this in his day as many in Israel joined themselves in the worship of Baal calling it the worship of God.

He saw the ungodly prosper

**Psalm 73: 12: Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches.** In both cases, secular or religious:

2 Peter 2: 19: While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. 20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

**Application:** Brethren, attempting to judge God's goodness to us by comparing our afflictions with the prosperity of the wicked only hinders us. By doing so, David's thoughts became like those who forsake the right way and go after wickedness.

**Psalm 73: 2: But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. 3: For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked....13: Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency. 14: For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.**

Yet in all this, God was showing David his goodness toward his sons and daughters. David is writing this after the fact. He is showing us the order of what he did and thought. He began with what he had been taught again through this, "**Truly God is good to Israel, *even* to such as are of a clean heart.**"

But during all this, David had come to the place where he needed for God to **create within him a clean heart**. He complained that v14: "**all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.**" Through all this God showed his goodness to him, teaching him

Hebrews 12: 5: And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7: If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8: But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. 9: Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 10: For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness.

## **II. WE ARE TAUGHT GOD'S GOODNESS BY EXPERIENCING HIS CONTINUAL KEEPING GRACE.**

The Spirit of God keeps our hearts by constraining us with Christ's love for us.

David was thinking it is vain to serve God, but he had not published his thoughts to anyone. But he was constrained by the love which Christ has for his people.

**Psalm 73: 15: If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.**

**Application:** Nothing more effectually keeps believers than the love of God toward his children.

- His love in his covenant promises to us
- His love in assuming our nature
- His love in laying down his life to justify us from our sins
- His love in bringing the truth to us, creating us anew

- His love in keeping us

The Lord's love cleanses our hearts to consider the Lord's care for his church, his children. In spite of all the wickedness in this world, God has a people who are kept by his grace in every generation. So he keeps us constrained as he did David, for the good of those Christ everlastingly loved. This is what the love of God in the heart does to us, for us.

The Lord keeps us by turning us from our own understanding to him.

**Psalm 73: 16: When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me;**

**Application:** It is impossible for us—by our reason, by our looking at things with the carnal eye, to know the end God has in store in his government of this world. When we try to understand by looking at things below—why God allows the prosperity of the wicked while afflicting his own children--it trips us up—our feet will well-nigh slip in envy.

**Psalm 73: 17: Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end.**

- Until I went into the house of God where God teaches us to assemble, where the Spirit teaches us in spirit and in truth.
- Until I went to learn in the scriptures—the holy word of God.
- Until I went in to his throne of grace to ask for grace to help in this time of need.
- Until I was taught of God THEN UNDERSTOOD I THEIR END

**Application:** You came here and we are learning from God from his holy sanctuary above, through his word, what God teaches us about these things. Has God settled you by his word? I hope so.

Had we not obeyed God, assembled with his saints for the public preaching of his word, looked into his word asking him to be our teacher, we would not be hearing this instruction right now, not even at least, with the natural ear.

When needy sinners reject God's ordained means of teaching his people, it hurts you and I, not in the sense that someone else's absence causes us to miss out, but because we love them and know they have missed the word by which God has blessed our own hearts.

It makes us to feel at least a small measure of what our Lord felt when he said "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!" (Mt 23:37)

God keeps us by teaching us the truth about the end of the wicked and the end of the righteous.

**Psalm 73: 18: Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.**

The feet of the wicked now appear steady but God has set them in slippery places. They appear to be elevated but God has cast them down to destruction. Paul said my foot well-nigh slipped by looking at them—who made the difference between the wicked and David--**Psalm 73: 23: Nevertheless I *am* continually with thee: thou hast holden *me* by my right hand.**

- Continually upon his *mind*, he is always thinking of me for my good.
- Continually before his *eye*; the eye of the Lord never sleepeth, but is perpetually watching for my good.
- Continually in his *hand*, so that none shall be able to pluck me from him unless omnipotence itself shall be overcome.
- Continually on his *heart*, graven there, worn there as a memorial, even as the high priest wore the names of the twelve tribes upon his heart for ever."

- Tried and afflicted and chastened—but even then--“Nevertheless”-Say it in your heart, “I am continually with thee.”
- Thou hast holden me by my right hand

**Illustration:** Will trying to go the wrong way but restrained by me holding his hand.

**Application:** Believers, know what we are if God lets go of us. We do not boast of our holding his hand but of his holding ours.

The wicked appear to die in peace but as soon as their eyes close in death **Psalm 73: 19: How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. 20: As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image...**but what about those saved by God’s grace?...**24: Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.**

- By his eternal counsel—his eternal decree—God’s predestinating counsel makes it so his child must prevail.
- By his written word—which tells me how the story will end
- By his counsel of peace accomplished by Christ Jesus—when all else fails I lean upon the fullness of the covenant he has made to me--declaring the completeness in which Christ has put away all my sin and blotted out all my iniquity—his counsel that he will not remember my sin anymore. He guides me by his counsel and afterwards receives me to glory

Brethren, if your life is not like you always thought it would be, don’t fret. Don’t look at the wicked and envy. The Lord shall guide us and AFTERWARDS receive you to glory—to an incorruptible inheritance reserved in heaven just for you. Like it was said to the man in hell,

“Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.” (Lu 16: 25)

God keeps us by correcting us through his gospel, making us see our error in envying the wicked.

**Psalm 73: 21: Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. 22: So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.**

1. In verse 10 he said, “Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full *cup* are wrung out to them.” And in the sense of David, or one of God’s own, who stumbles at the prosperity of the wicked, who begins to have thoughts of vanity and foolishness—we come to have a cup of sorrow wrung out to us, too.

When he shows us his faithfulness even during our most staggering unbelief--our inward heart—grieves at our own unfaithfulness to God. We are pricked in the inward most depths. So foolish was I and ignorant

Isaiah 1: 3: The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib:...**but I was as a beast before thee.**

Yet, even when we have been as a beast before the Lord, God sees the believer in Christ, wearing Christ’s garments, washed in his blood therefore his love and grace changes not.

1 John 2: 1: My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

The Psalmist said, “**There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared.**”

### **III. GODLY REVERENCE IS THE PEACEABLE FRUIT---THE END--TO WHICH HE BRINGS US AGAIN AFTER EACH HARD TRIAL.**

**Psalm 73: 25: Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.***

It is possible to lose loved ones, property, homes, and still not desire Christ and go on seeking happiness in this earth. But when God reveals this: **Psalm 73: 26: My flesh and my heart faileth: *but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*** Then we will cry out...**25: Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.***

**Psalm 73: 27: For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. 28: 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.***

John 3: 21...he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

We who believe have committed—our committing to him—we have trusted him to keep us trusting him even when we are not trusting him....**THAT--**as the Lord keeps us in spite of us—we might declare all his works. That is what David is doing here and what I’m trying to tell you about now.

Believer, looking to this world will cause our feet to slip and cause the old man to be puffed up in envy, bitter, and if not for grace, to throw up our hands and join the wicked. Instead, ever look away from this world to Christ seated at God’s right hand, he is our Life...”When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” (Col 3:4)

#### **GO HOME WITH THESE THREE THINGS WE LEARN FROM THIS PSALM:**

1. Whatever our outward circumstances, “**Truly GOD is good to Israel.**” Even in the prosperity of the wicked, even in our afflictions, the LORD is bringing about the greatest good.
2. Learn that the chastening hand of our Lord is because of his unchanging love to his redeemed which he purchased with his blood. Because by our afflictions God cleanses our hearts to keep us partaking of his holiness while kept from the evil and making Christ JESUS more precious to us.
3. Remember the end purpose: this is how he makes us to declare his wonderful works rather than boasting in ourselves. Witnesses most eminent in GOD’S service are most eminent in suffering, yet being kept by his grace, it is his works we bear witness too. Sicknesses and losses cease to be bad things to us when our life ceases to be something that can be taken away.

Colossians 3: 1: If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Amen!