

Crisis of Faith and the Goodness of God (Pt 1)

sermonaudio.com

Crisis of Faith

By Brian Borgman

Bible Text: Psalm 73

Preached on: Sunday, February 1, 2009

Grace Community Church

2320 Heybourne Rd

Minden, NV 89423

Website: www.gracenevada.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/gracenevada

Let's take our Bibles and turn to Psalm 73. Psalm 73,

1 A Psalm of Asaph. Surely God is good to Israel, To those who are pure in heart! 2 But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, My steps had almost slipped. 3 For I was envious of the arrogant As I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4 For there are no pains in their death, And their body is fat. 5 They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like mankind. 6 Therefore pride is their necklace; The garment of violence covers them. 7 Their eye bulges from fatness; The imaginations of their heart run riot. 8 They mock and wickedly speak of oppression; They speak from on high. 9 They have set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue parades through the earth. 10 Therefore his people return to this place, And waters of abundance are drunk by them. 11 They say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge with the Most High?" 12 Behold, these are the wicked; And always at ease, they have increased in wealth.

This is the word of the Lord.

In the 1880s, King Leopold was king of Belgium and Belgium was a recently created but very small nation, and King Leopold wanted his nation to be rich and influential like the other nations of Europe. He wanted a bigger kingdom. And of course, during that time in human history, imperialism and colonialism was on the rise, and that's how nations gained their power and wealth and so King Leopold looked over the globe and saw that most of the other lands of the world had been laid claim to, but there was the unexplored interior of Africa. And so King Leopold raised up a private army and sent them to what we now know as the Congo. He was going to take the Congo as his own personal possession and the fountain of his nation's wealth. He was obsessed with finding something that would be valuable, and there in the Congo, he found that it was rich in rubber tree plants and he realized that the rubber tree plants could actually feed the burgeoning industrial revolution of his own day, but there was one problem, and that is harvesting these rubber tree plants was so incredibly difficult that the inhabitants of the Congo refused to work for King Leopold. But he wasn't going to be stopped, and so King Leopold unleashed his private army, the Force Publique, upon the Congo people, and he

forced them to work in the rubber tree industry and for two decades, he put them into forced labor, his private army using whips and chains and brutal beatings to compel the Congolese people to work. In order to keep the men from uprising, the women were raped and held as hostage. Villages were burned down. And at strategic locations, King Leopold would accumulate piles of severed hands and ears to remind the people that they needed to keep hard at work. It was a reign of violence and terror. One Belgium authority wrote to gather rubber in this district, one must cut off hands and noses and ears.

That's the world that we live in and that is the evil which produces untold suffering in the world that we live in. The world that we live in, tyrants prosper and mothers and fathers and children suffer. Consider also Venus Soko. Her and her husband lived in Zambia and together they had two small stalls where they sold food and other items in the market, and they made a living bringing food home for their children and giving their children a sense of dignity through hard work. Disease killed Venus's husband and a bully who owned the stalls next to them took her property, her business and let her keep nothing. She had one garment that she wore and that was it. No more coals for her fire. No more food for her pots. And her life was reduced to working these two stalls while giving all of the proceeds to the bully, and she watched her son grow crippled from malnutrition.

That's the world in which we live. This place called America is virtually a fictitious place in the real world. The world in which we live is the world where the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. That's the world that we live in and Psalm 73 is actually a classic Psalm that deals with the problem of suffering. Now, Psalm 73 doesn't struggle with the presence of suffering but with who suffers and who doesn't. That's what Psalm 73 is about. It doesn't deal so much with the problem of evil or the presence of evil; it acknowledges those things but what it wrestles with is who prospers from evil and who suffers from it. In many ways, Psalm 73 is parallel to the books of Job and Ecclesiastes in that it deals with the profound shortcomings of traditional wisdom which says the righteous prosper and the wicked suffer.

Psalm 73 is a wisdom Psalm. It's a lament Psalm. It's a Psalm which is autobiographical. It is it is painfully autobiographical. It is bitterly honest. It is a Psalm that has throughout the ages resonated with the people of God. But Psalm 73 also demonstrates to us how we should deal with our own emotions. Psalm 73 shows us what to do when we feel disoriented or despairing or hopeless. Psalm 73 actually shows us that even in the face of suffering, we can experience a renewed sense of joy in a world that's evil, and although Asaph will not come up with a categorical solution to the problem of suffering, in the end, his faith is rescued and his emotional well-being is restored and God salvages Asaph's faith through eschatology, what is going to happen in the end, and he renews his joy through theology, that is, what God is like. And so Psalm 73 actually is a glorious picture for us about the truth of how God and knowing who he is and communion with him can actually realign our hearts in the midst of suffering and in the midst of an evil world and can actually restore our joy.

Now Asaph is the writer and he's actually going to be responsible for the Psalms that go from 73 to 83. He was a Levite. He was chosen by David to lead the worship music for

the people of God. 1 Chronicles 15, he's mentioned among those who was called to raise the sounds of joy. Psalm 73, very strangely, in a roundabout kind of way, raises the sounds of joy. Not in a trite way, not in a way that most evangelicals are used to, happy, clappy, superficial joy, but he raises the sounds of joy in the midst of a real world that's impacted by people like King Leopold and bullies in Zambia.

Now, the Psalm starts out on a very good note for which we're thankful. There's proclamation in verse 1, "Surely God is good to Israel, To those who are pure in heart!" Now, this ends up being really the key to the whole Psalm and Asaph begins right out of the chute with a proclamation of something that is true about God. Psalm 73 actually starts like like many novels and some movies that actually begin with the last scene first. Now, frankly, I don't really like it when that happens. You know, they start out and you're like, what's going on? Oh, this is the end. It's the end. And then they go back and replay how they get to the end, right? Well, in novels and movies, that may not be our favorite way of telling the story, but I will tell you, it's worth its weight in gold in this Psalm. Asaph gives us the conclusion, the final scene right up front and now he's going to tell us how all of it can actually be, how he came to this conclusion. But here is his proclamation, "Surely, truly, indeed, God is good to Israel."

In his declaration that God is good, he is saying something that is true about God. This is a note that is echoed throughout all of Scripture, God is good and he does good, God is good and he does good to all of his creatures, and the theme of God's goodness reverberates page after page after page in holy Scripture. But have you actually ever thought about what it means to say God is good? It's way different than saying, "Mm, these meatballs are good." It's different than that. In this case, goodness refers to a moral quality about God. Goodness refers to the benevolence of God, the kindness of God, whereby he acts on behalf of others for their good, for their benefit. It's going to be vitally important that we keep that in mind as we go through this Psalm because Asaph wrestles with what happens when life looks like God isn't good.

Is that relevant to anybody in this room, what happens when God doesn't look good? I mean, there's all kinds of stuff that happens to us inside of us, outside of us, around us, relationships, circumstances, and if all we could judge the Lord by was our feeble sense based on the circumstances, surely God is good to Israel would not be the first thing that comes out of our mouths. But for Asaph, he makes that declaration. One Old Testament scholar makes a very interesting observation when he says that God's goodness in the Old Testament actually manifests itself to his people in covenant friendship. Certainly, God is our King and God binds himself to his people to do them good, and he does that as our King, our Redeemer, as our Father, but he also binds himself to us to do us good as our heavenly friend.

Job clung to God's omniscience, God really knows what the score is. Jeremiah clung to God's justice. Habakkuk clung to God's holiness. Asaph clings to God's goodness and so he begins, "Surely God is good to Israel, To those who are pure in heart!" I take Israel and to those who are pure in heart to be synonymous. Israel, that is the true Israel, the faithful of God, that is those who are pure in heart, that is, those who are committed to

the God of Israel, those who live in covenant fidelity to the God of Israel. We could say those who are pure in heart are simply those who are on the inside what they say they are on the outside. Throughout this Psalm, the word heart is going to play a significant role six times and notice right off the bat, Asaph says, "Surely God is good to Israel, To those who are pure," where? "In heart!" Martin Buber says that the state of the heart determines whether a man lives in the truth in which God's goodness is experienced or in the semblance of truth, where the fact that it goes ill with him is confused with the illusion that God is not good to him and so the state of heart actually ends up determining what sphere we live in. If our heart is aligned with Scripture and it is aligned with the character of God, then we live in the truth that God really is good and we experience the goodness of God even when we experience the sufferings of this world. But there is another sphere that we can live in that's only the semblance of truth and because it's only the semblance of truth, whenever we suffer or things don't go well, then we conclude God is not good to us. And so the state of heart is so critical in Psalm 73 and Asaph's declaration is very simple, God is good to Israel, God is good to those who are pure in heart, and this is his resolution that he comes to after he struggles and he starts this Psalm out by shouting, by declaring, by proclaiming the goodness of God. He comes out of this painful experience and process that we're going to look at and he is resolved, his struggle has ended, his faith has been restored, and here is his declaration at the end of the day, God is always good.

There are some of you and it is taken suffering and trial and affliction and pain for that truth about God to really mean something. What we're going to find out in this Psalm is that we don't experience and then turn around and declare the goodness of God when the barns are full, and the cattle don't miscarry, and the 401k is thriving, and the promotions and raises are coming in like a flood. Certainly, we ought to acknowledge the goodness of God in those times, but the goodness of God is a declaration not for people who are skating through experiencing untold blessings in life, but the goodness of God is the declaration of those who have hit bottom. and find out at the end of the day that the God of heaven, my God, the God of Israel, is the God who is good and does all things well.

Why is that an important way to start the Psalm? Because of verse 2. I'd rather start with verse 1 than with verse 2, "But as for me." Don't anybody go get a license plate that says, but as for me, because that's not the kind of but you want to be advertising. "But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, my steps had almost slipped, for I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked." The "but as for me" in verse 2 actually set up the contrast as to why that proclamation is so important. Now comes the confession and Asaph's honesty in this is brutal and raw, he says, "I actually came close to abandoning my faith." That's what he's saying. Make no mistake about it. The New English translation says "my feet almost slid out from under me." What Asaph is confessing in verse 2 is that there was something that came into his life that shook him to the core in such a way that he almost fell, slipped, fell away from God. There was something that impacted his life in such a way that he almost abandoned his faith in Yahweh. That was how he experienced it. That's how it felt to him. Now, we're going to find out at the end of this Psalm that God is the strength of his heart and so even when his feet were close to falling, God had his heart still, but make no mistake, the way that he experienced this was, "This came into my life like a flood. I couldn't get away from it.

And my feet almost slipped. I almost fell away from the God I love." I think Asaph would have would have given a hearty amen to Robert Robertson's hymn, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love." Asaph would have said, "I was there. I was right there. I was so close to walking out on God. My foot slipped and I almost lost my balance. My feet almost slipped right out from under me and my faith almost dissipated like the morning dew."

Now, that's an honest confession. Then he says, why, verse 3, the reason why he almost lost his faith, "I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." And you think, well, that's a stupid reason. I don't think so. It's not a good reason but let's not take Asaph's struggle too lightly because what he wrestles with in this passage is something that we all feel, and Asaph's problem, again, was not the problem of suffering, but it was ultimately the problem of justice. He looked out and he saw the arrogant, that is, the boastful and the proud, those who resist the authority of God and who refuse to live under his law, and he looked at the arrogant and they prospered and he says, "It doesn't seem right. It doesn't seem right." And by the way, when he says, "I saw the prosperity of the wicked," what he says actually in the Hebrew text is, "I saw the shalom of the wicked." And if there's anything that the Bible tells us, it's that the wicked shouldn't have shalom. In fact, there's no rest, there's no peace for the wicked. I read that in my Bible. And Asaph says, "You know what? I looked out and I saw rotten, evil, wicked, horrible people experiencing shalom and I'm scratching my head saying, why do good things happen to really bad people?"

There's a reason why Asaph felt that this just wasn't right because traditional wisdom, conventional wisdom says it's the righteous who prosper. We read that theology in Psalm 144 this morning. Conventional traditional wisdom says the righteous prosper and it's the wicked who suffer, it's the wicked who get what they deserve. The righteous get shalom, the righteous get peace, the righteous get wholeness and fullness and blessing from God. The wicked have no claim on shalom. They shouldn't experience shalom in the least. They shouldn't even know how to spell it. What happened was that Asaph doubted God's goodness. I mean, let's face it, we live in a pretty isolated environment. We don't see the gross injustice of the Congo or Zambia or Cambodia or Vietnam or Malaysia. We don't see the gross injustice of man's inhumanity to man right out front and brutal in front of us all the time. But we see enough of it. I mean, don't you watch the news or read the news and just say, "God, what are You doing? God, what are You doing?"

Asaph began to doubt God's goodness, he questioned God's justice, and he actually found inside of himself that he was becoming jealous of those who had all of the blessing, but didn't do anything right. Asaph began to become envious of those who did exactly what they wanted, when they wanted, where they wanted, took advantage of whomever they wanted and still got all the blessings. And don't tell me that you've never ever been in that situation where there you are at work, you're a person of integrity, you work hard, you put in your eight, your ten hours a day, and you are the most faithful person there. Some other person is a sluggard, a slacker, a liar and a cheat, and when it comes time for the promotion, when it comes time for the raise, the sluggard, the slacker and the cheat get it,

and you are still stuck in the same old place. Jealousy rots the worshiper's heart and that's what was happening with Asaph here.

Now, understand this, in Psalm 73 it's not God who's on trial at the end of the day. It's Asaph who's on trial at the end of the day. It's not God who's sitting in the dock. It is Asaph who's sitting in the dock. It is not God's justice or goodness that's ultimately put on trial. It is Asaph's faith. Walter Brueggemann says that this Psalm impresses impresses one in its remarkable insight and candor. It's quite a remarkable thing, don't you think, to say I became envious of the wicked? It's a tale of a heart seduced and then healed, a heart isolated and then restored to fellowship. We would say it like this, Asaph experienced a crisis of faith. And here's the thing we have to see, that we are not exempt from same or similar crises of faith. I don't care if you have followed Jesus for 40 years, or 50 years, or 60 years, or 100 years. Not a single person in this room who names the name of Christ is exempt from the same kind or similar crisis of faith. The bottom line is that none of us are as strong as we think we are. None of us are as faithful as we think we are. Here's Asaph, he's not Joe Pugh, he's a worship leader. He writes songs for the people of God. He's got a theology. He's been appointed by David. This guy isn't just some Israelite spiritual bum, this guy's the cream of the crop and he says, "I almost fell because my heart became jealous because as I looked at this world, things are not the way they are supposed to be." You understand the way that we think the righteous aren't supposed to lose their jobs, and the righteous aren't supposed to get cancer, and the righteous aren't supposed to lose their homes, and their kids aren't supposed to get cancer, and their kids aren't supposed to grow up to be reprobates. We've got a frame of reference in our minds that is very similar to the very thing that Asaph wrestled hard against.

And so what was it? Verses 4-12 give us a description of the prosperity of the wicked. Now, here's Asaph's observation. Now, in 4-12, understand this, Asaph did not see everything there was to see, which is an important thing to remember when you are observing life, but what he saw was enough to deeply trouble him. Verse 4, no pain and death and they're fat. Well, you say, well, that's doesn't sound, the fat part doesn't sound good. Well, the difficult first line, I think the NAS actually captures the sentiment, "The wicked suffer no pain in their death." Asaph looked at him and he says, "You know what? I see these people die and they don't experience the terrors of faithless, godless people like I've always heard godless, faithless people experience. They look rather peaceful. I thought that was the dominion of God's people alone, not the rats and the skunks of this world." Spurgeon says they have a quiet death, gliding into eternity without a struggle. On top of that, they're fat. Now, the Net Bible is "well fed." I like that better. Well fed. Marvin Tate, a commentator, says fat bodies as a positive attribute may offend our modern health consciousness but it's an ancient picture of healthy prosperity. The wicked not only have enough to eat, but they enjoy their abundance. The thing that drove Asaph crazy was that the wicked actually have easy deaths and easy lives. They've always got enough to eat. They've got a super-abundance. They get fat, fat, fat, and then they die happy.

Verse 5, they don't have troubles like other men. Does this not speak to us today? I mean, it's plain enough, right? You've got Wall Street, big shots and corporate big shots that

bankrupt their companies because of their own greed. They ruin people's lives. They make people lose their jobs by the hundreds of thousands, and then they get million dollar bonuses. How is that fair? And having a few castigating words by people in power does nothing, they still get their bonuses and people still lose their jobs. They don't have trouble like other men.

Verse 6, they're dressed with pride and violence. In Old Testament times, a necklace was a symbol or a token of dignity. Asaph says these people walk around and you know what their token of dignity is, their arrogance. They're boastful. They're cocky. They're proud. They think that they are untouchable. And then as far as their garment goes, they're clothed in violence, that is the idea that they scheme and in their scheming, they hurt people to get whatever they want. It may actually come down to physical acts of violence. It may come down to simply violating a person's fundamental rights. Willem van Gemeren says they live at the expense of others. And doing whatever they want to whoever they want to get what they want, they just put that on like a garment. They don't try to hide it. They're not ashamed of it. And so they walk around proud, cocky, arrogant, thinking that they're bulletproof, doing whatever they want to get their deepest greedy desires.

Verse 7 is interesting, literally, their eyes bulge from fatness. Some commentators take this literally. In other words, they get so fat, their eyes look like they're bulging. I don't think that Asaph's point is their eyes look like they're bugging out of their head. It's a difficult line. Some commentators skip it altogether. A New English translation, their prosperity causes them to do more wrong. I think that paraphrases it. In other words, their eyes bug out, that is, they're full of covetousness, and the more prosperous they get, the fatter they get and the more they want. So it's this vicious cycle, their eyes bulge out because of fatness. In other words, the fatter they get, the more their eyes covet the things that they want all around them and so the idea here is really simple, it comes down to I forget who the rich guy was, Carnegie or somebody like that, and how much is enough? Just a little bit more. That's what drives these people, is their greed. Actually, that understanding of that verse makes sense in light of the parallel line, the imaginations of their heart run riot, the ESV, their hearts overflow with follies. New King James, it makes a more direct connection between the lines, their eyes bulge with abundance. They have more than their heart could wish. So at the end of the day, they never have enough. Their abundance has not resulted in gratitude or generosity which, by the way, is one of the things that you read in Scripture, when God prospers us, the result should be an incredible sense of gratitude to God for what he's done and then a sense of generosity to others. So the idea is, "Well, God's blessed me, so now I can bless others." These people, "I get the blessing, but I keep it all to myself. And at the end of the day, what do I want? I just want more blessing." And so their own abundance, God's blessing on them, if you will, doesn't result in the gratitude and generosity that it should, rather, it just results in a little bit more greed.

Verses 8 and 9, they're oppressive and blasphemous. Verse 8 in Hebrew, another very difficult verse, it pictures the way that the arrogant speak. Nothing is sacred to them. They mock everything. They also arrogantly turn around and talk about oppression or

their threats of oppression as if this is just normal business. Commentator Alan Harmon says they daringly talk as if they were God himself, and thus the whole world is theirs. They speak against heaven, that is, they speak against God. Their tongue struts throughout the earth. They speak as if they rule in the heavens and lay claim to the earth. The whole idea in verses 8 and 9 is that these are oppressive and blasphemously wicked people. They intimidate others. They instill fear with their threats. They victimize through extortion. And all the while they blaspheme God.

Verse 10, probably the most difficult verse in the whole Psalm, either the idea is they beguile people or they inflict further suffering on people. The first idea would go something like this for verse 10, the wicked in all of their pomp and pride and prosperity actually attract a certain kind of people to them who want to come and try to drink from the wicked's abundance. These are the popular success worshipers. These are the followers of the rich and famous. These are, if you will, the Kool-Aid drinkers who think that they have found an opportunity with the prosperous wicked. The RSV captures this, this is the sense of it, "Therefore, the people turn and praise them and find no fault in them." And so here they are making money hand over fist. They're fat. They're happy. They do what they want. They get what they want. They use whatever means they want. And then there are people who stand back and look at them and say, "Wow, I'd really like to be like that. I don't think I'm as ruthless as that, but I'd like to be like that. And so since I don't really have it in me to be like that, what I'm going to do is I'm going to hang on to their coattails and drink the water of their abundance and find myself filled with opportunities to prosper from their prosperity." There are people like that.

The other idea could be that that it refers to further suffering inflicted on people by the wicked. The Tanakh, which is a Jewish translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, say, "So they pound his people again and again until they are drained of their very last tear." John Goldingay translates it like this, "Thus blows come repeatedly to his people and abundant water, which represents for him an overwhelming danger, is drained by them." In other words, the wicked just simply pound God's people over and over and over again and they drink in that overwhelming danger and affliction until they drank it down to its last drop.

Verse 11 describes them for us as practical atheists. In verse 11, they reason that because God hasn't stopped them, he must be oblivious. Because God hasn't put the brakes on them, God must not be paying attention. I say practical atheists because these people, they live as if God does not see and does not know. That's practical atheism, and I would dare say that we have people in this building right now who actually are practical atheists. Your confession of faith is that you believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, but the way that you live on Monday is as if God doesn't see anything and the way you live on Tuesdays is God doesn't know anything. And Asaph says these people, they just do their thing. It's brazen. It's brash. It's out in front. They do their wickedness, their unrighteousness, and they act as if God doesn't see.

Verse 12 is Asaph's summary, "Behold, these are the wicked; And always at ease, they have increased in wealth." "These are the wicked," Asaph says. "These are the rotten ones. These are the bad ones. These are the ones who deserve to suffer. These are the

ones who deserve justice. But instead they're always at ease." Understand that this creates a crisis of faith for Asaph which shakes him to his core because the wicked are always at ease. He's thinking to himself, "This is not the way it ought to be." Proverbs 28:1, "The wicked flee when no one's pursuing. It's the righteous who are as bold as lions."

These people don't flee, they pursue. I have no doubt that there were passages, Proverbs wasn't written yet in all likelihood, but the truth was there, and I have no doubt that things like this just rocked Asaph's world, turned it upside down. "The way of the wicked is like darkness. They don't know over what they stumble. For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, he watches all of his paths. His own iniquities will capture the wicked and he will be held with the cord of his own sin. He'll die for lack of instruction. The greatness of his folly, in the greatness of his folly, he will go astray." And he knew those passages, he knew those truths and he says, "It doesn't happen that way." On top of that, the wicked are rich and they just get richer and how do they do it? By breaking all of God's laws and taking advantage of the powerless and the helpless and the oppressed. In fact, they are the oppressors. They steal. They intimidate. They oppress. That is not the way it ought to be. I mean, Psalm 1 was in existence, the wicked are supposed to be like chaff that the wind drives away. Instead, they're sitting in places of power. Making all the money.

I'm sure something like this went through Asaph's head, "The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked but he blesses the dwelling of the righteous." Asaph says, "Not in my experience." It's stuff like this where you say, "That's where I live. That's what I see. That's the way things are. That's the way things are." Understand this, don't read Psalm 73 as, "Well, Asaph, you deserve just what they deserve." Don't read it that way. That would be an unfaithful, unbiblical reading of this text, because the Bible teaches us that, indeed, there are degrees of sin and there are gradations of evil, and the godless people that Asaph describes end up being the worst of the worst. Why? Because these wicked are violent, and they intentionally hurt people, and they intentionally take advantage of people, and they use people, and they prey on the helpless and the powerless. And there is something about that that is profoundly wrong in God's world. Yes, it's true we're all sinners. It's true we've all fallen short of the glory of God. It's true that all of us like sheep have gone astray, each one has turned to his own ways. It's true. It's true that we all deserve the eternal punishment of God. But understand this, there are degrees of sin, gradations of evil, and I dare say that in God's economy, those who prey on the helpless, those who take advantage of widows, those who abuse children, those who take advantage of orphans, those who are wicked and intimidate and lie and steal and oppress and tyrannize, are the worst of the worst. And there is something inside of our hearts that say they deserve everything they get, and then we look at what they get and we say, "That's not what I was talking about."

And so Asaph says, "Well, why don't these wicked, unjust, oppressive, lying, blasphemous, fat, greedy, thieving dirt balls ever get what they deserve? Instead, it looks like they get what the righteous deserve." They appear to be blessed and that's why Asaph said, "But as for me, I almost lost my faith. As for me, my feet almost slipped right out from under me. I got consumed looking at all the stuff that they got, the stuff that I

wanted and the stuff that I figured that I deserved in God's world in keeping God's rules. The wicked get blessed and the righteous seem to get walked on. They appear to be getting what I think I deserve and I appear to be getting what they deserve." That is a crisis of faith. In the next hour, we're going to see how Asaph's faith was saved by the God of heaven.

Let's pray.

Father, thank You for an honest book. Lord, how discouraging would it be if the only thing we read in our Bibles was happiness and blessedness and strong faith and purity of heart, and all of the things yet unencumbered by a cursed and fallen world? Father, it's the very honesty of this passage which You intend to strengthen our faith with. We pray You'd give us ears to hear. Father, pray for those that are here that can't hear, can't see. They think You don't hear and You don't see. Father, bring conviction. I pray for those whose faith is tottering, whose feet are losing their ground. Father, we pray that You would rescue faith today, just like you did Asaph's. O God, give us ears to hear. In Jesus' name. Amen.