

**ETHAN TEMPLE MINISTRIES TOOLS FOR
LIFE
ASSC. PASTOR DANIEL GOLOVENKO**

The Right Way to Understand

Scripture: Psalm 73

SUMMARY

One of, if not the hardest part of the Christian journey is what theologians call ‘the problem of evil’. Life is hard and often the struggles we encounter cause us to ask some really difficult questions. Why do bad things happen to good people? Why are there so many natural disasters? Why does it seem like the wicked always get away with it? These and many other similar questions are all really struggling with ‘the problem of evil’ – how do we reconcile the existence of evil with the existence of a good and loving God?

While there are many different explanations and theologians have been wrestling with this problem for hundreds of years, most responses still seem lacking. One of the best explanations is described as ‘The Great Controversy’ – there is an ongoing conflict between good and evil, between Christ and Satan, and our human experiences of evil are a part of ‘The Great Controversy’. Yet, while many might intellectually understand “The Great Controversy”, they might still be left without an emotionally satisfying understanding. Yet, Scripture gives us cause to hold on to Christ even when we might struggle to understand, we are invited into the Sanctuary!

God is Always Good

Psalm 73:1-3

Psalm 73 is a beautiful expression of God's goodness towards even when we struggle to appreciate Him. The Psalm begins with a promise of God's goodness. Yet, immediately the psalmist, Asaph, expresses his own struggle of envying the wicked. Often, much like Asaph, we can be well aware of the goodness of God and still have things we personally struggle to reconcile with the fact he is God.

Psalm 73:4 – 12

Asaph explains why he grew envious of the wicked with exaggerated descriptions of their success. They carry on without struggling like others do, and they seem to get away with their wickedness so much so that they flaunt it like clothes right in the open. They talk big, filling the expanse from heaven to earth (v9), to the point they disregard the relevance of God. We may know such people, and if you don't feel like you know any such people – it might be you.

Psalm 73:13-16

Asaph reaches a conclusion that many of us might have considered at some point in our lives – we've been good for nothing. And almost at the point of giving up and giving in (v15,16), Asaph starts to reconsider his envy of the wicked.

Psalm 73:17

Recognizing the limits of his human reasoning, Asaph seeks answers in the Sanctuary of God.

Psalm 73:18-20

Asaph learns that things aren't always as they seem, when at first he thought he was the one slipping (v2), he sees that really it is the wicked who are on a slippery slope to destruction. And for all their grandstanding and showboating, the success of the wicked fades like a dream, never even being real in the first place!

Psalm 73:21-28

Asaph corrects himself admitting he was a fool for having envied the wicked. Yet, in spite of his foolishness God has been and continues to be with him. God guides him by the hand. Asaph recognizes that all that truly matters, all that is really worth anything, is a relationship with God. For all the supposed success the world has to offer, Asaph has come to understand that being close to God is true success. Asaph is satisfied being with God. Psalm 73, doesn't aim to give any intellectual rationale to the 'success' of the wicked, it gives an even better answer – God is in control and cares for us. It is good to be near God!