



**Title:** Faith Under Trial

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**Scripture:** Psalm 73

AI TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to Bible Insights with Wayne Conrad. God's word is a lamp to our feet and a light on our path.

Today's topic, faith under trial. One of my favorite Psalms, because of the message that it brought to my heart when I was a student in college years ago, is Psalm 73. And the message of that Psalm really resonated with me when I was reading a book by Martin Lloyd-Jones. And the name of that book is Faith on Trial. It was revolutionary to me because it really helped me get a hold of some of the tragedies, you might say, some of the hardships and real events that had shaped my life up to that point. And even in the perspective of several decades later now, the book still influences me because the psalm influences me. It opened up to me a great message.

And I just want to read with you today Psalm 73, and I'm gonna be using two translations, somewhat interchangeably, the English standard version and the Christian standard version. I'm going to read and give a run-on commentary or interpretive analysis of the psalm. It's a song ascribed to Asaph. Now Asaph is basically the leader of worship in Israel at this particular time. He was a musician and obviously he was one who thought deeply about God, who worshiped God. But he's experiencing, I think, these things. He's sharing something that happened to him. And maybe in some respects it happened to the nation then or later. And it certainly happens in the life of many believers in God, including myself.

So, this is Psalm 73, a Psalm of Asaph. God is indeed good to Israel, to the pure in heart. are truly God is good to Israel to those who are pure in heart. And it's a statement. It's a statement that he's come to. He says, this is the truth. This is an affirmation of truth concerning God and his relationship with his people.

Verse two, but as for me, my feet had almost stumbled. My steps had nearly slipped. The Christian standard, but as for me, my heart, my feet almost slipped and my steps nearly went astray. So this is the truth about God. And yet you say, but for a while, at a point in my life, My feet almost slipped. I nearly went astray. And then he tells us why. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. It's looking at those who did not believe in God, those who did not follow God. And he said, I envied the

arrogant. I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They seem to be blessed. They seem not to really have the trouble. They seem to have all things that they need or want.

And then he gives an analysis of them. He says, for they have no pangs unto death. Their bodies are fat and sleek. They're not in trouble as others are. They're not stricken like the rest of mankind. Therefore, pride is their necklace. Violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes swell out through fatness. Their hearts overflow with follies. They scoff and speak with malice. Loftily, they threaten oppression. They set their mouths against the heavens and their tongue struts through the earth. Quite a description. They have an easy time until they die. Their bodies are well fed. They're not in trouble like others. They're not afflicted like most people. Therefore, pride is their necklace, and violence covers them like a garment. Their eyes bulge out from fatness. It's a description of some who has plenty to eat. Their imaginations of their hearts run wild. It's imaginations of wickedness, by the way, of violence. They mock and they speak maliciously. They arrogantly threaten oppression. They set their mouths against heaven and their tongue struts across the earth. He's describing the fact that they are an arrogant people full of pride and their mouths, all their mouths, they speak against the most high and they speak against his people.

He goes on, therefore, his people, he's talking about God now, therefore his people turn to them and drink in their overflowing words. The wicked say, how can God know? Does the Almighty know everything? That's true. There are statements. There are statements of unbelief, a statement that's trying to throw it, believers, to put us down. They say, you know, God, if God exists, well, he doesn't know anything, or he doesn't know everything, or he doesn't pay attention to all the things that we do or other people do. How can God know? I mean, he just doesn't know. That's what they're asserting. They say, how can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?

The psalmist says, Behold, these are the wicked, always at ease. They increase in riches. That's his evaluation. They have everything. They're at ease. They're increasing their wealth. And then he turns inwardly. He's thinking about himself. He's giving self-thought. The ESV says, all in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long I've been stricken and rebuked every morning. That's his evaluation. As he looks at them and he considers himself, did I purify my heart and wash my hands in innocence for nothing? Am I afflicted all day long and punished every morning? This is what he's feeling. He's feeling as if God is somehow afflicting him, punishing him. And he doubts, I mean, is it all for nothing?

He said, if I had decided to say these things aloud, I would have betrayed your people. So, he's considering these, this is his inner thoughts. And if I had said, I will speak thus, If I uttered this with my mouth, I would have betrayed the generation of your people. I would have hurt your people. That's what he's saying. You know, sometimes we don't need to speak aloud the conversations going on in our mind. We have to weigh whether this will help, will it build up, or will it undermine and destroy.

And then he says, when I tried to understand all this, it just seemed hopeless. He's trying to wrap his mind around it, but it's just a wearisome task. When I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task. It seemed hopeless. I just couldn't do it. I couldn't get my mind around it.

And then here's the turning point. Here's the real key of the whole psalm. He said, when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task until I went into the sanctuary of God. Then I discerned their end. He was hopeless to understand the situation until he entered God's sanctuary, the place where God lived, the place where God's word was spoken, the place where God was exalted, the place where God was centered. Then he says, this is what happened. Then I understood their destiny.

You know, it's important that we have the right perspective. Our human perspective, even when we're regenerated, even when we're followers of God, can be skewed because of the conflict we have with the world, the flesh, and the devil. And with those who seem to have everything, though they're unbelievers in God, and even oppose God and his people. That's not always the right perspective. Because we really don't know sometimes what's going on inside the minds of the conflicts that others may be having who seem to have it all together and have everything they need.

But he says this, when I went before the presence of God, when I went to the place where God dwells with his people, then I understood their destiny. I understood that God has made a distinction between his chosen, his elect, of whom I am one by his grace. Looking at it from God's perspective, this is what he says about them.

Indeed, you put them in slippery places. You make them fall into ruin. How suddenly they became a desolation. They come to an end, swept away by terrors. Like one waking from a dream. Lord, when arising, you will despise their image. Saying, you know, God will deal with them in his own time. But their end is not anything to be envious of. One day, suddenly, they will become a desolation.

He goes back to thinking about his own inner state. You know, earlier he said, when I thought about these things, when I thought about speaking to them out loud, I would help back. Because I would have betrayed the generation of your children. So, I held back from speaking it.

But here he says in verse 21, but when I became embittered and my innermost being was wounded, I was stupid and I didn't understand. I was like an unthinking animal toward you. He understood the condition of his heart. His questioning mind is something that he shouldn't have had.

My soul was embittered when I was pricked in heart. I was brutish and ignorant. I was like a wild beast toward you. It was an acting. A human being made in the image of God, remade by the grace of God. No, he was acting like an unregenerate man who thinks that God is on trial. But God's not on trial. God's never that way. This was my state.

But yet I'm always with you. You hold my right hand. He's expressing the fact that God is faithful even when we are not always faithful. When we are questioning and struggling in our faith, God remains steadfast. He is our hope.

You see, the psalmist, Asaph, what he needed to do was he needed to follow close to God because as David said, your right hand holds on to me. There's a modern hymn that we sing. It's actually based on an old hymn written many, many years ago. It reads; he will hold me fast. That's what Asaph is expressing.

Yet I'm always with you, and you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel. And afterward, you will take me up in glory." He's contrasting now the fate of the wicked and the fate of himself as a believer

in God. God is always with him, even when he thinks he's not. He will hold me fast. He will guide me with his own counsel. And afterwards, you, Lord God, will take me up in glory.

And this led to him praising God, breaking forth in worship as he says to God, who do I have in heaven but you? And I desire nothing on earth but you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Oh, if we had the perspective of God, if we see who he is and who he is for us in his redemptive mercy and grace given to us in Jesus Christ our Lord, then we too would burst forth in the praise of acknowledging and confessing whom have I in heaven but you, and there is nothing on earth that I desire beside you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and he's my portion forever.

That's the climax. He ends in worship, but now he goes to a resolution. You know, he began with a statement about truth. God is indeed good to Israel, to the pure in heart. And now after all of this mental, internal, emotional, spiritual conflict, warfare, struggle, we might say, his reflection is for the wicked. For behold, those who are far from you shall perish. You put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. Those far from you will certainly perish. You destroy all who are unfaithful to you.

But as for me, as for me, a believer, one with whom you've dealt with mercy and grace and love, but as for me, it is good to be near God. As for me, God's presence is my good.

And now here's his concluding affirmation. I have made the Lord Yahweh my refuge. I have made the sovereign Yahweh my refuge that I may tell of all your works. so that I can tell about you and about all you do. God has dealt with us in mercy and grace. He's wrapped around us his love. Even when there's conflicts and struggles without and within, he will not let his own go. He will hold us fast. It's good to make the Lord God, the sovereign Yah, my refuge, so that I can tell all about what you do.

That's the resolution, not only to experience the mercy and grace of God, but as a recipient of his mercy, of his grace, and of his dealings with us, that we can tell others about what He's done for us and what He does so that we can be a witness, a worshipping witness.

You know, the greatest witness you can give to God is to be a consistent worshiper of Him. And from the perspective of a worshiper who believes and trusts in the Almighty God, you can tell with confidence, boldness, and the blessing of his spirit who God is and what he has done for the good of mankind, and especially for those who belong to him by grace through faith in his beloved son.

This has been Wayne Conrad. Bible Insight with an interpretive reading of Psalm 73.