

Koronis Conference 1970-01 Psalm 73;

by Neil Fraser

The sermon explores the theme of faith and perseverance in the face of trials and afflictions, using Psalm 73 as a guide to understanding the importance of estimating life in eternity rather than in the transient circumstances of this present life.

Duration: 47:32

Scripture: Psalm 73:1

Topics: "Faith in Adversity", "Eternal Perspective"

Description

Neil Fraser reflects on Psalm 73, emphasizing the struggles of faith when witnessing the prosperity of the wicked compared to the suffering of the righteous. He highlights Asaph's journey from confusion to clarity, which came when he entered the sanctuary of God, leading him to understand the ultimate fate of the wicked and the eternal security of the faithful. Fraser encourages believers to view their present afflictions in light of eternity, reminding them that God's justice and love transcend current circumstances. He stresses the importance of maintaining faith and perspective, urging the congregation to focus on the 'afterwards' of their faith journey.

Transcript

It's a pleasure to be back with you once more in Minneapolis. I'm sorry I couldn't come last year as invited. I'm happy to be back here again.

Now, I think every time I come back to Minneapolis, I remember the first time I was here, over forty years ago. I had been preaching in North Dakota, and Mrs. Bicyker said, I'm going to write to the Minneapolis Brethren and have you go there. I said, you are? She said, yes.

I owe a great deal to that lady, and so do many. It was she that said to me, you ought to go over to Hertzfield and preach there. And I did.

Then the assembly was started, and still continues. She invited Mr. Harold Harper to come to North Dakota, where he had some of the largest meetings and most fruitful he ever had. It was a pleasure to come.

I remember on the way down here, we were traveling in the old type of car that had their suitcases out on the running board and facing the elements. Some of you will remember those cars. But on the way down,

the rain started, and I got to Minneapolis, and most of the things in my suitcase were wet, including my sermon.

And Mr. McPhee, with whom I was living, said, well, no doubt the Lord knew that we were rather dry. I'm happy to be back. I'm happy to be associated with Mr. Kirk.

I think on one occasion in the past we have been together. Now he has been telling us about a man who walked with God. I want to speak about a man who confessed that his steps had well nigh slipped.

Let's read in Psalms number 73. Just when I was sitting in the living room this morning, and I was looking at Psalm 73, I got a call for breakfast. And after breakfast was over, our brother Dan Leverage said, now we'll read the word.

Let's turn to Psalm 73. I said, well, what made you turn to that? He said, well, that's the daily reading this morning. So I took it as a token for good that God might want us to look at this portion.

And then our brother Kirk told us about walking. And when he said that sometimes the adverse things in our lives make us cry, why, why, why? I was reminded that Asaph, who wrote this psalm, confesses that he was crying, why, why, why, about the things which were happening to him. And he had no solution until he tells us that he went into the sanctuary of God.

So I trust these messages will run together this morning, and we shall discover how not to slip as we are walking day by day. Now, Psalm 73 is the first of the sanctuary psalms. From earliest times, the Jews divided the Psalter into five.

And these divisions are clearly marked in our Bibles today because each of those divisions ends with the words, Amen and Amen, or Amen, Hallelujah, or Hallelujah. And there are five divisions. From earliest times, the Jews likened those five divisions to the five books of Moses.

That is to say, they called Psalms 1-42-41 the Genesis portion because they seemed to see that God was revealed in his work as creator and benefactor to the world at large. From Psalms 42-72, we have the Exodus portion of the psalms. And six or seven times over there, you come across the word redemption.

It's the Exodus portion, the redemption portion of the psalms. Psalm 72 ends with the time when Israel's exodus will be complete. Israel's exodus was never complete in former days because of 600,000 men over 20 years of age who left Egypt, only two entered the promised land.

The carcasses of the others were strewn across the wilderness. The exodus was not complete as far as they were concerned. And even those who entered the land, the two who were left and the generation born in the wilderness, never completely finished their exodus.

When you get to the end of the book of Joshua, you'll read that there was still much of the land still unpossessed. It never fully succeeded in driving out the enemy. But when you get to Psalm 72, you discover that in the age to come, the millennial age, that redemption for Israel will be really complete.

Psalm 73 begins the Leviticus section. Now while it is in Exodus that God said, let them build me a sanctuary, it is not until you come to Leviticus that the sanctuary is complete and is beginning to function for God. And in the first of these seven sanctuary psalms, in the first of these we read, I had no explanation of what I saw around me until I went into the sanctuary.

So let's read this together, shall we? Psalm number seven is ready. Truly God is good to Israel. Oh by the way, how would you like just to let us read responsibly this morning? I shall read verse one, and you'll read verse two, and we'll go down to the end.

Truly God is good to Israel. Even to such are as of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone.

My step was well nice. He wasn't walking very well. For I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

For there are no bands in their day, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride encompasses them about as a shame.

Their eyes stand out with fatness they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt. They set their mouths against the heavens and their tongue walketh through the earth.

And therefore his people return filling, and waters of a full cup are run out for them. And they say, How is of God now? Is their knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungrateful. Verily I cleanse my heart in faith, and wash my hands in innocent faith.

If I say I will speak thus, behold, I should offend the generation of thy children. Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end. How they brought into desolation as in a moment.

They utterly consumed with terror. As a dream when one awakened, so, O Lord, when Thou awakest, thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant, I was to the beast before me.

Nevertheless, I am continually with thee. Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards lead me in the right.

Whom have I in heaven but Thee? There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart fail me. For, lo, they that are far from Thee shall perish.

Thou hast destroyed all them that go a-whoring from Thee. Thank you. Now, this psalm gives to us the test and the triumph and the testimony of faith.

It begins in verse one with a testimony and it finishes in verse twenty-eight with a testimony. And in between we have the trial and the triumph of faith. And the turning point is verse seventeen.

Now, the trial of faith, of course, is the unbalanced state of things that Asaph, who wrote this psalm, saw around him. Asaph was a man appointed by King David for the praises of Israel. And he wrote some of the psalms.

Now, Asaph confesses a great perplexity. As he looked around him, he saw the apparent prosperity of the wicked and the undoubted painful plight of the righteous. And the unbalance of things which he saw so preyed upon him that he confessed, that if I gave utterance to the thoughts of rebellion that are in my heart, I should offend the generation of my people.

He says, My steps have well nigh slipped. Notice what he says about the wicked. First of all, their prosperity in verse three.

For I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. There are no bands. That word, bands, means tangs, the word that describes a woman in childbirth.

There are no tangs in their death. Their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other people, neither are they plagued like other people.

They are for pride. The prosperity has led to pride. Pride compasses them about as a chain.

That word, chain, means necklace. Violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand up with fattened.

They have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression. They speak loftily.

They are pretentious. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither.

The waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. That's a difficult verse. It means one of two things.

It means, according to some, that God's people turn to them and are ready to swallow their philosophy as a thirsty man swallows water. On the other hand, it may mean that the waters of a full cup, as a metaphor for full pleasure, is apparently given to them so that they are popular. So you have a number of things here.

The prosperity, and the pride, and the pretension, and the popularity of the wicked. Now that's what Esau saw as he looked around him three thousand years ago. Now this message is relevant for us today, because the same condition obtains today and ever has in the history of men.

The apparent pleasure and prosperity and peace of the wicked. I say apparent, because they're not having a good time that we think they are. When I was down in Florida last winter, I saw a picture in a newspaper of the new chief of the Mafia.

The Mafia is the great crime syndicate of the United States, whose leaders are well known to the government, but they're never apprehensive. And they had a picture of the new boss of the Mafia, an Italian, as so often their leaders in the Mafia are in nationality. But the picture showed a man, thin-faced, sober, solemn, unhappy.

And the article said that this man was supposed to be extradited to his native Italy three years ago. But because of his heart condition, it was considered unsafe to send him out of the country. So we have to preserve his heart at all costs, so that he becomes a leader in the Mafia in the United States.

That's how far we've come, friends, from integrity and righteousness in our country. And the Bible says that righteousness is exalted for nations, but sin is a reproach to any people. And we're living in those days today.

So I use the word apparent. Nevertheless, as we look around, we see conditions as Asac saw them 3,000 years ago. So the message is relevant for us today.

Now notice what he says in verse 13. He says, Verily I have cleansed my heart in faith, I have washed my hands in innocence. I'm read to confess that life isn't worth living.

What's the use of trying to live for God If the life of the child of God is constantly plagued by sufferings and trials, on the witty apparent day, ghosts got free. He says, For all the day long have I been plagued, the plagued condition of the people of God, and chastened every morning. If I say I will speak thus, that is, if I give utterance to what's in my heart, I should offend the generation of the children.

And I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, until, until I went into the sanctuary, then understood I there is. Asap was brought into the sanctuary, and God gave him a glimpse of what lay beyond this present, screnching life. And Asap learned, as we have to learn, that the justice of God is not to be estimated on the basis of his long suffering with evil in this present life, but can only be estimated in the balance of the century.

For in the verses which follow, he says, Thou didst set them in slippery places, they are slipping too, they are on their way to fall. Thou castest them down into destruction, they are brought into desolation in a moment, they utterly consume themselves. In other words, this is all the heaven, if you can call it heaven, that the wicked have.

And when the long suffering of God ends, well there it is, the long suffering of the wicked begins. When the long suffering of God ends, the long suffering of the wicked begins. And Asap said, I discovered that the justice of God is not to be estimated in the light of his long suffering towards the wicked today, not willing that any should perish, that all should come to repentance.

And by the same token, the love of God towards his children is not to be estimated in the transient circumstances in which they now live. For when they depart, to depart the present life is to be ushered, as he said here, received up into glory. That's what we need to learn.

Now it was the sanctuary that supplied the solution. And the sanctuary ever supplies the solution to our problems. And all problems that relate to this present life as to the suffering of God's people can only be truly estimated as we remember the transient character of this present life and the eternal character of the life to come.

We must not estimate, we must not balance things in the scales of this present life. We must balance them in the scales of eternity. And Asap said that the wicked in a moment are in utter desolation and consumed in terror.

And that forever, while the people of God learn to estimate life, shall I say in the terms of the New Testament, for our life affliction, which is but for a moment workers for us a far more exceeding eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, which are temporal, but the things which are not seen, which are eternal. Notice the contrast in this verse.

You have the contrast between a weight of glory and a light affliction. Now you may say, my afflictions are not light, Mr. Fraser, I assure you. But the apostle says they are light in comparison with the weight of glory that the witch is.

And we must learn to live now and consider our afflictions light in comparison to the glory which shall afterwards be revealed in us through divine grace. You see? The next contrast is our light afflictions, which is but for a moment workers for us an eternal weight of glory. You must make those contrasts day by day.

Now look what emerges from the sanctuary experience as given to us in verse 22, 23, and 24, where we have a past, a present, and a future. We have his humbling past, and we have his heartening present, and

we have his happy future. Notice the past.

So foolish was I, and ignorant I was as a beast before me. His humbling past, the confession of his past. He says, you see, I got to I got to be just like the wizard, as if I were what? A beast before me.

A beast is happy if you have something to eat and some place to lie. A beast has no future. It doesn't look for a future.

It's content like the dog of the south. If it's fed, it gets something for its belly, and some place after it has eaten, that's all that matters. Now the wicked are like that, they just live for the present.

Give them the present, and there's no heart for the future. I was like that. God's people are quite apt to get like that if they're not careful.

Give me my job, give me my home, give me my money, give me my possessions, and you can have your eternal riches. I was ignorant and foolish, and as a beast before me. His past, his humbling past.

He confesses it now. But look at his heartening presence. The calm of his presence contrasts to the confession of his past.

Nevertheless, I am. Notice the change in the tense. Nevertheless, I am.

Continually thou hast holden me by my right hand. I can walk as we heard, because Lord, you've got me by the right hand. I hadn't been long preaching when I was in Alexandria, Minnesota, if I remember.

And a man attended my meetings night after night, a man from the Free Methodist Church, dear child of God. But he said to me one evening, Mr. Fraser, I've been enjoying your message up till now, but I couldn't quite follow you tonight. I said, why? He said, because you said that we have eternal life.

We can never be lost. We're eternally secure in Christ. He said, I couldn't follow you there.

He said, to me it looked like a child holding its father's hand as they're walking along a slippery street. And the child lets go and falls and gets up and ruefully rubs his sore spot and walks on again taking the father's hand. And then it forgets and lets the father's hand go and down it goes again.

Finally it gets up and says, Daddy, I can see unless I hold down, hold on, I'm lost every time. He says, that's how it appears to me. I said, well brother, I'm not a father.

That was years ago. I've got three daughters now. A man's got three daughters, no wonder he gets gray hair.

I said, I am not a father, but if I were, I'd be very careful my daughter did not hold my hand on the slippery street. He said, why? I said, I'd hold her hand. I'd hold her hand.

Now I said, the difference between you and me is this. You think you're holding on to God and I'm thankful he's holding on to me. And I'll give you scripture for it.

I give unto my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish. You shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My father is greater than all and none shall pluck them out of my father's hand.

See, I'm in the savior's hand and then I'm in the father's hand. But he said, what about that verse in Peter? About the dog returning to his plumb line and the sow that is washed with wallowing in the mud. How about that? I said, well brother, Peter was a Jew and Peter knew what were clean animals and what were unclean according to Jewish law.

And you'd never find him using a sow and a wash to describe a real child of God, I assure you. He knew better than that. When Peter refers to a child of God in his letter, he calls them sheep.

But in his second letter when he's talking about mere possessors who are not possessors, he talks about dogs and sows. And the fact that he uses the terms he does should assure you he's not talking about real children of God at all. Amen? One man agrees with me.

Thank you. That's really sad. Nevertheless, I am continually with thee.

You know, what with God? Thou hast holden me by my right hand. How about the future? Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel. And afterwards, afterwards, receive me to glory.

This present life is not to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us. This present life is transient. This present life is a training ground as we heard.

But it's still very brief comparatively. And our affliction is a light affliction comparatively. And you and I must live in the light of that afterwards.

Now I want you to turn now please to Hebrews 12. Now Hebrews 12 I think is built up on the word afterwards. If you write the word afterwards in your thinking about Hebrews 12, I think it will do you good.

For in this context you have the afterwards of the Saviour, the afterwards of the Son, and the afterwards of the sinner in this portion. Let's read it together. Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses that the men and women too, thank God, who are walking the path of faith in chapter 11.

Chapter 11 for your study is divided this way. By faith we understand verse 1. By faith we undertake in the verses that follow until you come to the sufferings and by faith we undergo. And it's only by faith we do all praise.

By faith we understand. By faith we undertake to do what those men and women did long ago. And it's by faith we undergo the trials of life.

We can only do so by faith and in the balance of the sanctuary. Now, when you come to chapter 12, those who are in the arena are now witnessing our deportment in the arena. I'm not suggesting that those who have gone before are quote, gazing over the battlements of heaven and observing our conduct on earth.

God wouldn't allow that, I'm sure. It would fill them with dismay, I'm sure. I say dismay because of the poor way that we represent the Lord down here on earth.

But the similar, the figure if I understand it is that those who in chapter 11 were in the arena are now elevated to the stand. You and I are in the arena now. We are doing the running now.

But as we do our running we are not told to lift our eyes to the stand. No. Let us run the race that says here verse 1, the race that sent before us looking unto Jesus.

You dare not look at the stand otherwise you won't run well. For all those men in the stand fail somewhere. Although it may not always be written that they do.

Hebrews has a way of minimizing the errors of the old. Especially in chapter 11 because in chapter 10 it says there are sins and there are iniquities like a memory memoir. We read chapter 11 to see how they disported themselves in the arena.

What a chapter it is. But when you come to chapter 12 wherefore seeing we also are compassed about the so great cloud of witnesses. Let us lay aside every weight and the sins which are so easily set out and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

The word run instead of walk is used because we are to be impressed with the urgency of this present period. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith. Who for the joy that was set before him, that was his afterwards.

For the joy that was set before him, endure the cross, that was his past. Despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. So that in verse 2 you have the past, the present, and the prospect of his faith.

Notice that. His past, he endured the cross and he despised the shame. As to his present, he is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

And as to his prospect, for the joy that was set before him. You see, the Lord Jesus did what he did because of the afterwards. I don't say he did it completely because of the afterwards.

His supreme joy was to do the Father's will for the present. But we are told here that for the joy that was set before him because of the afterwards, for you and for me, as well as for himself, he endured the cross. He was prepared to go through the suffering and the sweat and the smiting and the tears and the loneliness and the forsakenness because he was living in the light of the afterwards.

And we must do the same. Now let us say in verse 3, For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself as pets, lest ye be weary and faint in your mind. Ye have not yet resisted unto bloodstriving against sin.

Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint in thy rebuke to him for whom the Lord loveth ye chasten. And scourge every son whom ye receive. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons.

For what son is he whom no father chastens not? But if ye be without chastisement whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and non-sons. Father, Lord, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them forever. Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father who stirred and lived? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own flesh, that means that seemed good to their city.

But he for our prophets, that we might be partakers of his holiness, notice that, after their own flesh and earthly fathers, he for our prophets, I said to my second daughter the other day, I says, you know, Betsy, you got twice as many spankings as my other two. But sometimes, after I spank you, I said to myself, you spank her, not so much because of what she did, but because you were angry at what she did. Are you ever like that, you young fathers and mothers? Be careful.

Oh, I was so glad, however, that every time I came home from being away, she was the first to rush out of the door, come to me in the car, and say, Daddy, I'm so glad to see you back. And the day before I left home, all three daughters were home, one from Florida, one from Eugene, and one on the island at that moment. Within five minutes, the elder one passed me by when I was working in the garden.

She kissed me on the cheek. She said, I love you, Daddy. And she walked home.

She's about thirty-three years of age now. Five minutes later, the second one passed by, and she came and whispered something in my ear as I passed by. And when they were gone, I just stood and thanked God for them.

And I strived, dear friends, and I hope you do too, to be like Abraham of whom it was said, I know him, that he shall command his children after me in the ways of God. That's the highest ambition you can have. So they barely chastened us after their pleasure, not to what they thought was etiquette, though sometimes I have said, we have gone beyond what was meant.

But he for our profit that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the presence seemed to be joyous for me. Nevertheless, after, under life, after, a yield of the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exorcised thereby.

My verse from 2 Corinthians 4 says, while we look at the things which are not seen, while we do it, it's working its perk. And here it says, to them who are exorcised thereby, we've got to get something out of it. We are not to be like those further down in the chapter of which it says, lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet as you walk.

Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be hewn. In other words, dear friends, we have to see that our affliction are kept in proper perspective. We are not to be like Esau, who says, if I give utterance to what's in my heart, I should stumble unto it.

And here it says, you and I must be careful when we are trying, lest we give utterance to what we are feeling, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way. The worst thing you can do is to give utterance to your lack of confidence in God to some other believer, especially one who is weak in the faith. Don't give utterance to the unbelief and distrust of your heart under affliction to your children in the home and to the children of God at large.

You may stumble them and turn them out of the way. Looking diligently, lest any man fail the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness spring up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. You are not to let some other brother or sister's conduct towards you result in the root of bitterness.

That looking diligently, if I remember right, in Greek language, something you do is connected with elders, if I remember right. Lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for one parcel of meat sold his birthright, for you know how that after, after, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. What was wrong with Esau? Personality? No.

He had a better personality than Jacob, in my judgment. Esau loved the open space. He didn't know that, if he had, he'd have gone about singing, or give me a home, whether bustle or old, on the deer in Antelope's lair.

He loved the open space. He didn't like the house particularly, whereas Jacob went about the house, he was so hand, his mother loved him, he was so good at the chores. He went about with his head down.

Esau had his head up, Jacob had it down. He was going about wondering how he could improve the quantity and quality of the herds. His mother loved Jacob, his father loved Esau.

What was wrong with Esau? He had no heart for the afters. He came in hungry after hunting, he had taken no notice. And Jacob was bending over the fire, cooking something in the pot.

And Esau said, give me some of that, give me some of that. What is that? Jacob says, I'll give it to you if you give me your birthright. And the birthright brought the greater blessings in the times to come.

And Esau says, you can have it. I'm not trying to die. He didn't mean he was that much exhausted.

He meant I'm going to die someday. And if you give me something from my belly now, you can have your birthright. With all its spiritual importance.

He had no heart for afters. Now you and I, dear friend, must have a heart for the afters. We must weigh our present life in the balance of centuries.

We must remember that we're dust, as we said last night. But he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. Forever.

And we must live, and we must invest in time, talent, treasure in view of the afters. We must be prepared to be called foolish in the expenditure of our energies and possessions, for the life to come by the world to have no heart for the present. And I want to ask you fathers and mothers today who are young teenage sons and daughters, what is really your ambition for? Do you want them to be something in the world? Or do you want them to be counted for eternity? A man said to me in Chicago one time, I learned afterwards that he was a very rich man.

He said, Brother Fraser, I'd rather have my son sweeping the streets of Chicago for a living with a hold upon living God than holding down the biggest job in Chicago with others. I said, Brother, Amen to that. How about you? How about you? Afterwards, afterwards, let's put it up in our hearts.

There was a man in Philadelphia who after years and years saved up \$2,000 and he announced he was going to spend the \$2,000 in one day. And he did. He hired a special car on the train from Philadelphia to New York.

He put up at the biggest hotel. He gave tremendous tips away all day. He bought expensive presents.

And finally got into his special car going home after he'd given away his last penny. And people said, what a fool. Taking him years to amass \$2,000 and he spent it in one day.

What has he got? Immediately the man's telephone began to ring. A number of theaters called up from New York. Will you come and show yourself on our stage for five minutes and tell us what you did and we'll pay you so much per night.

Another called up. Will you appear on our stage and we'll pay you so much per night. Somebody said, will you advertise our program and we'll pay you so much.

And he found himself with endless jobs and the possibility of ten times more than he had spent. So people changed their opinions and said, well he was a very wise man after all. He was prepared to be called a fool for the present because of the accident.

His eyes for the future. You and I must be prepared to be called fools for Christ. Fools by the world.

But we are fools for Christ. We're going to live this present in the light of the accidents. We're not going to slip by the grace of God when they look at the world.

We'll finish our course of joy. God grant it.

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