

***When Life Doesn't Seem Fair*** – Psalm 73 (Page 616 in pew Bible)

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Let's begin this morning by talking about perception. How we view something becomes reality for us. The New Scientist magazine has compiled a list of actual statements made by children regarding their perspective about scientific matters.

There are three kinds of blood vessels: arteries, vanes and caterpillars.

Water is composed of two gins, Oxygen and Hydrogin. Oxygen is pure gin. Hydrogin is gin and water.

Blood flows down one leg and up the other.

Rhubarb is a kind of celery gone bloodshot.

Before giving a blood transfusion, find out if the blood is affirmative or negative.

To keep milk from turning sour: keep it in the cow.

A child's perception of reality is often much different than ours. But adults can get mixed up as well. This week, NFL training camps opened. In 2002, a Green Bay Packer football player got cut from the team in training camp because he got his signals crossed. Jason Brookins misinterpreted the Packers' request for his playbook on the clubhouse monitors as a sign that he was being cut from the team. After turning in his playbook, he jumped in his car and began the long drive to his home in Missouri. He had turned off his cell phone so team officials couldn't reach him. Unfortunately, his perception was wrong. The Packers had no intention of releasing him. His name was simply listed so that his playbook could be updated in time for the next practice. He ended up being cut because of his misperception.

It's so easy for us to get out of touch with what is real. When we lose our perspective of reality, we can say and do some pretty crazy things. Our perception of reality will always affect our response to reality. I wonder if some of you may have lost your spiritual equilibrium as a result of some faulty perceptions.

Life sometimes doesn't seem fair. Nonbelievers seem to experience more blessings than we do. In order to find some spiritual stability we need a reality check. The best place we can go to get things "reframed" is to listen to God's communication system – the Bible. This morning as we wrap up our summer series called, "Praying through the Psalms," we'll see how Psalm 73 gives us God's playbook on what to do when we get our signals crossed.

This psalm was written by a man named Asaph. He was a mature, godly man who served as the worship leader in the temple and was the author of 12 different psalms. Yet, in spite of all this, he was ready to hand everything in and head back home. He almost walked away from God because his perception of reality was mixed up. This psalm is very personal, and filled with gut-wrenching honesty. Asaph asks the question that many of us have asked at one time or another: If God is supposed to bless believers, why do we struggle with health, finances, and relational turmoil while the unbelievers around us seem to enjoy prosperity? Or, we could ask it this way, "Why are the wicked successful while the righteous suffer?"

#### The Human Perspective

Asaph looks around and from a human perspective wonders what is going on in the first half of the psalm. He was bothered by what he had been taught in Scripture because what he had

experienced in life was radically different. He came very, very close to losing his confidence in God's goodness because of four things that he saw around him.

1. The prosperity of the wicked. Verse 3 - "For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." He's doing what many of us do when we make judgments based only upon what we see. His perspective is on the present and he's forgotten the future.

2. The peace of the wicked. Verse 5 - "They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind." They live in the fast lane but don't seem to crash and burn. Their life appears painless and easy. Charles Spurgeon once said, "Those who deserve the hottest hell often have the warmest nest."

3. The pride of the wicked. Verse 6 - "Therefore pride is their necklace..." The very people who are often the most prosperous and live the most peaceful lives are also those who are the most arrogant.

Let's admit something this morning. We're jealous of those who seem to live without boundaries, of those who can do whatever they want. Why should you live for Jesus when your friends seem to be doing all right without Him?

4. The self-pity of the righteous. In verse 13, Asaph basically believes that there is no advantage to holy living. "All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence." From a human perspective, there seems to be little reward for righteous living. The Living Bible puts it this way: "Have I been wasting my time? Why take the trouble to be pure?"

### The Heavenly Perspective

As we come to verse 17 we see a noticeable shift in Asaph's paradigm as he goes through a reality check. "Until I went into the sanctuary of God..." In the first half of the psalm, he is viewing life from a human outlook. In the second half, he reframes his understanding of reality by looking at heaven's viewpoint. The first section deals with the "trial of faith," and the last part addresses the "triumph of faith."

When we look at life through the eyes of eternity, we will see four things:

1. The ruin of the wicked. Verse 18 - "Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin."

2. The repentance of the righteous. Not just looking at the here and now...(Gospel)

3. The rewards of the righteous. Verses 23-24 "Nevertheless I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory."

4. The responsibility of believers. Verse 28 - "But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge..." Our first responsibility is to stay near to God. Our second responsibility is to tell others about God.

One of the best motivators for evangelism is to come into the presence of God and allow Him to shift your paradigm. Think of your classmates, relatives, co-workers, neighbors, and friends who don't know Jesus. Are you attracted to their lifestyle? Do you wish you could do the same things they do? Do you wish you could have their toys? Ask yourself this question: Where will they be

when the finality of God's judgment lands on them with a thud? Friends, those we may have wanted to join are the very ones we must rescue. We will want to tell of all His deeds. We cannot sit on the good news while people are slipping and sliding into the horrors of hell.