

Psalm 73

MPS: Entering true worship turns our doubt into delight.

INTRO

A Psalm of Asaph

Who is Asaph? – a worship leader who led a temple choir

OPEN

Most of you have probably heard of Francis Schaeffer.

He is widely regarded as one of the most influential Christian pastors and thinkers of the twentieth century. He wrote dozens of books—several of them still widely read today. He and his wife Edith founded L’Abri (French for “The Shelter”), an alpine ministry in Switzerland that became a legendary sanctuary where tens of thousands of skeptical, searching young people found a faith that was beautifully alive. Today L’Abri communities still operate around the world—in Switzerland, England, the Netherlands, the United States (in Massachusetts and Minnesota), Canada, South Korea, Australia, Brazil, and beyond.

But long before all that fruitfulness, Francis Schaeffer was simply a Presbyterian pastor—a rising star in his denomination. He was part of a theological movement that prided itself on being right and doctrinally sound. Yet as he looked around, and as he looked into his own heart, he saw something missing: the kindness and the power of God. Where was the reality? Where was the joy? Where was the living presence of Christ that the Bible so clearly promised?

That question plunged him into a profound crisis of faith—a long, dark season of doubt.

In 1951, while living in a chalet in the Swiss Alps, Schaeffer decided he could no longer go on pretending. He told his wife Edith that for the sake of honesty he had to go all the way back to the beginning—back even to his pre-Christian agnosticism—and rethink the entire Christian faith from the ground up. For more than three months he sought the Lord with fresh honesty. When the weather was clear he walked the mountain paths. When it rained he paced back and forth in the hayloft of their chalet, praying, wrestling with Scripture, and reviewing every reason he had for being a Christian. Many have called this season of his life the “hayloft experience.”

Then, gradually, the breakthrough came.

Schaeffer later wrote:

“Gradually the sun came out and the song came. Interestingly enough, although I had written no poetry for many years, in that time of joy and song I found poetry beginning to flow again—poetry of certainty, an affirmation of life, thanksgiving, and praise.”

The doubt that had almost shipwrecked him drove him to seek God with ruthless honesty. What he found was not a weaker faith, but a deeper one—full of reality, joy, and praise. That

season of doubt became the doorway to everything that followed: L'Abri, his books, and a ministry that helped countless people discover the same living reality of God.

His doubt did not end in despair. It ended in delight.

Have you ever doubted?

Does God really care about me? Can I really trust the Bible is His Word? Is this true?

Is the church really His idea? Is any of this real? Does God even exist? If so, is He really good?

When I suffer, is He really close to me? Does He really answer my prayers – even when it seems like it, was that just a coincident? Did the miracles in the Bible really happen? Does He really still perform miracles today? Can I trust Him, His Word, the Church.

We all doubt. When we doubt, things get difficult. Things get hard – very little joy, peace, or even hope.

When we doubt, there needs to be a hayloft experience. This Psalm gives us a realistic and clear pattern to follow.

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1. The danger of doubt

1 Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.

- He starts out with the truth about God! – HE IS GOOD. Vs two lets us know there are somethings that happened in the past that he is reflecting on now – The truth is God is good - But...

2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped.

- This is language describing walking on a path. Think about some paths you've walked before in the mountains where you better stay on the path or you might be in trouble.

Doubt is a form of spiritual vertigo where your heart spiritually can't process something you see

- God is good, but I was almost a goner.
- What happened? Why was Asaph almost a goner?

3 For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

- Can't we all testify that?

- We see others who are bad and they're really prospering, and here we are really trying to be good, decent people, and we are struggling....

4 *For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek.*

No health issues, they eat what they won't and aren't struggling with their bodies.

5 *They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind.*

Their life, at least from a far, seems trouble free.

6 *Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment.*

Prideful and mean, they mistreat others to get what they want

7 *Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies.*

They do whatever they want and nothing bad is happening to them

8 *They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression.*

The way the talk to and about others is sickening – you just don't treat others that way

9 *They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth.*

They are unfriendly toward the things of God – they hate the things of God (vs 10-11 too)

12 *Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches.*

They keep getting wealthier, more power, more ease in life.

- This just isn't fair – it is not just. Asaph is thinking "God is not good, He is unjust" and that leads to his doubt.

13 *All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence.*

- I'm a good person, I really try to do the right things.
- I am a believer, I go to church, I worship the Lord, I give, I serve, I aim for obedience
- "My heart is clean"
- All this is just done in vain... it doesn't matter, no one cares especially the Lord
- Yet, all these good things are happening to bad people. And, here I am a good person yet bad things are happening to me.
- News alert... you are not a good person. You haven't kept a pure heart. The only difference between you and the wicked that prosper is you've been forgiven and have been given Jesus earned righteousness.
- Paul said he was the chief of sinners
- Spurgeon said, "If you have your moral portrait painted, and it is ugly, be satisfied; for it only needs a few blacker touches, and it would be still nearer the truth."

2. The necessity of doubt

16 *But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task,*

- We all doubt, and it can rule over you or it can serve you. One leads to misery the other joy.
- In some ways you don't grow without doubts
- We have Psalm 73 because of doubt
- We have L'Abri all over the globe because of doubt

17 *until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end.*

- Enter the sanctuary – means to worship – it was
- Only thing that can settle your doubt is seeing the sacrifice of the Son
- Doubt isn't always negative – sometimes it's necessary

18 *Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. 19 How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors! 20 Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms.*

21 *When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, 22 I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you.*

- "I acted like an animal but you treated me as a son."
- He realized he was just as unworthy as the wicked – Asaph was just like the wicked
- Just like you and me
- The wicked people that popped in your mind? You know what the difference is between them and you? The blood.

3. The delight that doubt made possible

23 *Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand.*

- Nevertheless ... he didn't let go
- I doubted you God, nevertheless
- I strayed from you God, nevertheless
- I sinned against you in my darkness, nevertheless
- I hurt people I love, nevertheless
- I rejected you Lord, nevertheless
- I rebelled against you God, nevertheless

- I acted like an animal, nevertheless... He treats you like a son or daughter.

24 *You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. 25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

- I am going to slip, I am going to stumble, but at the end of the day – you are my heart's desire.
- “If I don't have you, I have nothing. Everything else I don't really have.” They live for beauty, but their beauty is fading. They live for money, but their money is fading. They live for success, but their success is failing. If you don't have God, you really don't have anything, because everything is just slipping away from you. Therefore, it's hard to believe in God. It's very shaky to believe in God, but it's more slippery not to
- Everything I desire in the world is found in you – its only because of the sacrifice, the cross, that it happens.
- Shopping cart vs candy checkout

27 *For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.*

- All the fattened pigs are going to die...

28 *But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.*

- When you live in doubt you don't have refuge
- True refuge is the cross. It's the refuge because only the cross keeps us from this judgement of the wicked...not our good works, but HIS GOOD WORK that we get to tell others about.

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QUESTIONS FOR GROUPS:

1. Asaph nearly stumbled because he envied the apparent ease and prosperity of the wicked (vv. 3–14). In what ways have you experienced a similar “spiritual vertigo,” and how did (or does) that envy shape your view of God’s goodness?
2. The turning point for Asaph came when he “went into the sanctuary of God” and discerned the end of the wicked (v. 17). How does entering true worship—fixing our eyes on the sacrifice of Christ—turn our own doubts into the kind of delight Asaph expresses in verses 23–28? Share a personal example if you can.