

THEOLOGY OF SONG – “FOREVER REIGN”

When you read 1 and 2 Kings, you come across an ongoing carousel of kings that were given the privilege to rule. Every once in a while a man would stand out as somewhat faithful in a portion of his ways, but the consistent theme is a repeated lineage of unfaithful kings. Not only were they unfaithful, but also the turnover for the role of king was extremely high. Either a man was so self-destructive that he tore at his own rulership, or jealousy filled the hearts of others and that king would be killed. Either way, the word “king” seems to be trivial and sad during those days.

The song, “Forever Reign”, is a reminder of Jesus’ kingship. He was born a king, he died a king, he resurrected as king, right now he reigns as king, and he will always rule as eternal king. He is infinitely wise and immeasurable in his goodness as the King of Kings. He is the opposite, in every way, of the kingship that man has demonstrated since Genesis 3.

Jesus is the king who calls his people to faithfully think, speak and live as a people who trust in his all-powerful kingship. We see this represented for us in Psalm 73.

The 73rd Psalm is a psalm of Asaph. In this wonderful passage, we are given a glimpse of a man who is both inwardly and outwardly, struggling to remember the character of God. This chapter shows us this in the following order: (1) A proclamation of God’s goodness, (2) a difficulty in seeing God’s goodness, and (3) a reminder of God’s goodness. Asaph is deeply identifiable because how he is thinking during this season of his life is a reminder of our own experiences of faith struggle.

Asaph starts Psalm 73 with the simple, yet overarching statement that God is good.

Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. (Psalm 73:1)

He is good to His people. He is good to them when they are pure and (even a brief reading of the history of His people shows) He is also faithful even when they are not pure. He is altogether good. He is only good at all times. Every motive, every word, every action is perfectly good. Asaph starts this passage with this truth because he believes it. Yet, it’s also a loaded verse. A verse that serves as an anchor statement for the many emotions and questions that Asaph is about to share with us. Verses 2-15 show us.

But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek. They are not in trouble as others are; they are 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. Therefore his people turn back to them, and find no fault in them. And they say, “How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?” Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning. If I had said, “I will speak thus,” I would have betrayed the generation of your children. (Psalm 73:2-15)

Asaph is in a place of doubt and struggle. What he knows of God’s goodness is not playing out in his life the way that makes sense. He sees those who care nothing for God, living in wealth and with careless ease. He sees the arrogance of the world go unpunished. He sees those given to impurity living how they want. He sees those that oppose God walk about with no resistance, no struggle. And he has questions. Questions of “Is trusting God worth it?”

Then, though, the momentum of the text turns on a dime. In the midst of darkness, hopelessness, sin, fear, sadness and death, Asaph is reminded of what that anchor statement he knows to be true, that God is altogether good. This belief, though, is not just one of thought, but also of action. Look at verse 16.

But 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. (Psalm 73:16-17)

Asaph is showing us how to properly address and respond to seasons of doubt and struggle. He tells us that his thinking was brought back to a place of proper thinking by actively obeying God. He says my understanding of God's goodness was given clarity when I walked in a trust and obedience to God. Even when he wasn't physically motivated or immediately able to see beyond his difficult moments, he actively trusted God. He stops turning to himself for answers and understanding, but instead runs to the God who is good. He runs to the God who sustains, the God to which nothing and nobody can be compared, to the God who shines light where every shadow has tried to lay its cold head.

And in verses 23-26, we see what is produced in Asaph's life.

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. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (Psalm 73:23-26)

This proclamation of God's goodness is much more than the verbal proclamation that we saw at the beginning of this chapter, but is also an active response to trust God as everything that we are not.

What a picture of what God's rule looks like when it seems that everything and everyone else is ruling. His kingdom is greater and His reign is unending. Praise God!