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Life-Study of Psalms: 30

As we read the Bible, we need to learn the principles of the Bible. Especially we need to keep in mind the basic principle that the divine revelation in the Bible is progressive. If we are clear concerning this, we will realize that the speaking of Job's three friends is a matter not of divine revelation but of human opinion. How, then, can we regard their opinion as divine revelation?

We face a similar situation when we come to the Psalms. I appreciate the comment of John Nelson Darby that the Psalms are the expressions of the psalmists uttered out of their complex sentiments. We should not regard every aspect of the psalmists' sentiments as the divine revelation. It would be very unwise for us to do this. On the one hand, the psalmists received a certain amount of the divine revelation; on the other hand, their receiving of this revelation caused them to have various sentiments, including sentiments related to hating their enemies, to doing good, and to keeping the law.

Many Christians appraise the Psalms very highly and even exalt them. On the contrary, I have been helped by Darby to see that some of the expressions in the Psalms are not the direct expression of the divine revelation but the expression of the complex sentiments of the psalmists. The psalmists who uttered these expressions were pious; they loved God, feared God, and tried their best to please God, trust God, and keep the law. With the exception of trying to keep the law, all these things are good. Trying to keep the law is contrary to one of the principles of the Bible. The law was not given for God's people to keep; rather, the law was given to try them, to prove them, and to convince them that they were unable to keep the law.

Today's Christians commonly say that every word of the Bible from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21 is the word of God. I believe that the Bible is wholly inspired by God but not that every word in the Bible is a word by God. Surely, the word of the serpent to Eve in Genesis 3 is not a word by God, and it would be a great mistake to say that it is. In the Bible there are many words uttered by God's enemies, for instance, the words uttered by the chief priests and the scribes in their mocking of the Lord Jesus (Mark 15:31). My point here is that we need to differentiate between the word spoken by God and the word spoken by others. No doubt, every word out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus is a word out of the mouth of God, and such a word is the divine revelation directly given. However, in the Bible there are many words that are not the words of God. Without those words we would not have the proper background for the showing of the divine revelation.

In the fifty chapters of Genesis we have a history of a number of people from Adam to Joseph, but in this book there is very little teaching or doctrine, if any. Without teaching or doctrine how can there be much revelation? In this matter, Romans is very different from Genesis. Chapters one through fifteen of Romans are filled with Paul's teaching.

What do we have in the Psalms? Do we have history and doctrine? No, in the Psalms we have the expressions of sentiments. How much of the divine revelation is unveiled in a particular expression depends on the kind of sentiment conveyed by that expression. Certainly David's expression of his sentiment of hatred for his enemies should not be considered something of the divine revelation.

I hope that this opening word will help to give you, especially the young generation, a proper foundation for understanding the Bible. In particular, I hope that this word will help you to understand what I am endeavoring to do in these messages on the Psalms. In our reading of the Psalms, we need to realize that certain expressions are not of the divine revelation but of the psalmists' complex sentiments.

Let us now go on to consider Psalms 73 through 76, which are concerned with the desolation of God's house and Christ as the solution.

I. THE PROBLEM OF DESOLATION

It may be hard for some to believe that the temple, God's house, was desolated, but it was desolated to such an extent that it was burned, and the city surrounding it was ruined.

A. Due to God's People's Negligence of the Experience of Christ

What was the cause of the desolation of God's house? Apparently it was because the children of Israel were evil and sinful. However, the intrinsic reason for the desolation was that Christ was not exalted by God's people; they did not give Him the preeminence, the first place, in everything. Actually their failure to give Christ the preeminence, their failure to honor and exalt Him, was the cause of their becoming sinful and evil.

The principle is the same with us in the church life today. If we do not love Christ with our first love, giving Him the first place in everything that He may have the preeminence among us, the church will become desolate. The desolation of the church as the house of God always issues from the negligence of the experience of Christ.

B. Solved by Christ Properly Appreciated and Exalted by God's People

The problem of desolation is solved by Christ being properly appreciated and exalted by God's people. Recently the church in Anaheim has been praying for revival. If all

the saints in Anaheim would give Christ the preeminence, exalting Him to the uttermost and loving Him with the first love, there would be a genuine revival. The real revival in the church depends upon everyone in the church life giving Christ the first place in everything.

If we are clear concerning the problem of desolation and its solution, we may now go on to consider Psalms 73 through 76 one by one.

II. THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SEEKING SAINTS

Psalm 73 is on the sufferings of the seeking saints.

A. God Being Good to Those Who Are Pure in Heart

Psalm 73:1 tells us that God is good to those who are pure in heart. To be pure in heart is to have God as our one goal and aim. No doubt the psalmist here was this kind of person.

B. The Sufferings and the Puzzles of the God-seeking Psalmist

Verses 2 through 16 are a record of the sufferings and puzzles of the God-seeking psalmist. Verse 2 says, "As for me, my feet were nearly turned aside;/My steps had almost slipped." This indicates that the psalmist was nearly stumbled by the situation concerning the prosperity of the wicked (vv. 3-12). Whereas Psalm 1 says that the wicked do not prosper, here the psalmist is puzzled by the prosperity of the wicked, who are at ease and heap up riches (v. 12). The psalmist goes on to say that he has purified his heart in vain, that he has been plagued all day long, and that he was chastened every morning (vv. 13-14). Psalm 1 says that the one who keeps the law will be blessed, but in Psalm 73 we see a law-keeper who was plagued. In verse 15 the psalmist continues, "If I had said, I will speak thus;/Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children." This pious seeker of God was suffering, but if he had told others about his situation, they would have been stumbled and would have said, "Whoever keeps the law will be prosperous." However, here is one who kept the law, yet was not at all prosperous. In the next verse the psalmist tells us that he was puzzled. "When I considered this in order to understand it,/It was troublesome in my sight." This is a heavy word. The more the psalmist considered the situation, the more he was troubled and puzzled.

C. The Solution Obtained in the Sanctuary of God

In verses 17 through 28 we see that the psalmist obtained the solution in the sanctuary of God. "Until I went into the sanctuary of God;/Then I perceived their end." Where is God's sanctuary today? First, God's sanctuary, His habitation, is in our spirit. Second, God's sanctuary is the church. Thus, to go into the sanctuary of God, we need to turn to our spirit and then go to the meetings of the church. Once we are in the sanctuary—in the spirit and in the church—we will have another view, a particular perception, of the situation concerning the wicked.

1. The Wicked Being Set in Slippery Places to Be Cast Down into Ruins

Having gone into the sanctuary of God, the psalmist could perceive that the wicked were set in slippery places to be cast down into ruins (v. 18). This caused the psalmist to say, "How they are made desolate in a moment!/They are utterly consumed by terrors./Like a dream from which someone awakes, You, O Lord,/Upon arising, will despise their image" (vv. 19-20).

2. God to Be His Pure Seeker's Only Possession in Heaven and His Unique Desire on Earth

"Whom do I have in heaven but You?/And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth" (v. 25). This verse reveals that God's pure seeker would have God as his only possession in heaven and his unique desire on earth. God was the psalmist's unique goal. The psalmist did not care for anything except God and gaining Him. In this matter, Paul was the same. In Philippians 3:8 Paul said that he counted all things as refuse in order to gain Christ.

Psalm 73 ends with these words: "My flesh and my heart fails,/But God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever" (v. 26). Here we have the answer to the psalmist's question concerning his suffering and the prosperity of the wicked. The one who does not care for God may gain many things and seem to prosper. However, the one who cares for God will be restricted by God and even stripped by God of many things. As we will see in the upcoming life-study of the book of Job, this is what happened to Job.

Burdens for Church Prayers

- Pray for winter training that the Lord release His speaking to water the whole earth.
- Pray for the 5-day and 5th term GOWT that the Lord continue to train us with His grace.
- Pray for YP that they will experience Christ in their spirit as the reality of all the sacrifices and the offerings for building up of God's dwelling place.
- Pray for the growth of the feeling of the Body of Christ.
- Pray for spreading to nearby cities
- For daily exercise in GOW training: prophesying on Lord's day by daily enjoying His word and pursue the truth and attend Lord's day meeting on time.
- For gospel preaching on West Valley College campus, as well as for English-speaking testimony in Campbell.

Announcement

- Morning Revival on Psalms: 73 ~ 84. One or two psalms per day (about 42 verses) .Life Study: 30 ~ 33.
- YP Bible reading : John chapter 7.
- Prayer meeting Tuesday (12/13) at brother Tien's place.
- GOW 5th term registration is open, deadline 12/15, register with brother Liu.