Psalms: The Greatest Hits: **Psalm 73 – Don’t give up!**

**150 songs, 400 years, 12+ authors – a shuffle through the best –**

**The ancient playlist of those who served the LORD.**

**Boxing – the towel is thrown… and in life.**

**That restaurant that has the lock on it, wife/husband with unmet expectations, anxiety filled, an exhausted pastor, unmotivated, you feel empty, temptation is pulling, God is not speaking… no one is there.**

**You grab the towel… the towel is in your hand – what will you do?**

* **In Psalm 73 a person is contemplating throwing in the towel.**

**I read this and can relate to this guy. David wrote a lot of Psalms, but not this one. It was written by a guy named Asaph.**

**Who can honestly say they have never heard of this guy?**

**ASAPH - THE MAN BEHIND THE STORY:**

**1 Chronicles 16:1They brought the ark of God (David bringing the Ark – the great symbol of the throne of God - to Jerusalem) and set it inside the tent that David had pitched for it, (no temple yet) and they presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before God. 2 After David had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD. 3 Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each Israelite man and woman. (Big party…) 4 He appointed some of the Levites (priesthood family) to minister before the ark of the LORD, to make petition, to give thanks, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel: 5 Asaph was the chief,** **Zechariah second… (a list is given - then explains how they are to lead worship) 7 That day David first committed to Asaph and his associates this psalm of thanks to the LORD: (a song written and given to Asaph - the worship leader – a major responsibility – here sing and lead this.)**

**At the end of chap- 37 David left Asaph and his associates before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister there regularly, according to each day's requirements. (This was not just a one-time gig – he was in charge of a staff of over 450 musicians and people – a minister who is around the presence of God)**

**He was responsible for leading worship for the nation of Israel at the very throne of God (the Ark), a spiritual heavyweight.**

**2 Chronicles 29:30 – later another king says - let's sing the songs of David and Asaph the Seer (the prophet – a powerful spiritual leader)**

**He was a rock star, celebrity, and #1 musician in the Nation - had clout, authority, skills to match, and a unique link to God.**

**So, Asaph writes in - Psalm 73:1 Surely (not sure who she is…) God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. 2 But as for me, (God is good, but not to me – I am struggling) my feet had almost slipped; had nearly lost my foothold. (I was ready to leap and leave, losing my footing) 3 For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. (I saw the wicked blessed with a good life, and my life is suckin’ eggs)**

**I look at everyone else and they seem to have it better than me - where is my abundant life? Thinking of throwing in the towel.**

**4 They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. 5 They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills.**

**Btw – is that true? No. Sometimes, in depression, we can’t process what is true. But there does seem to be a sense that wicked people have no restraint and live a fun life.**

**6 Therefore, pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. 7 From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits. 8 They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression. 9 Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. (They act spiritual, but they are in love with the things of this life – live a double life) 10 Therefore, their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. (parties and friends)**

**Ever notice how doing the right thing does not always pay off - But I said the truth, did the right thing, stood up for justice…?**

**11 They say, "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" (You think He really cares about this or knows – he does not know or care about me) 12 This is what the wicked are like— always carefree, they increase in wealth. (That verse alone comprises all he is thinking… little does he know)**

**WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT GIVING IN:**

**\*\* Focusing on others will only depress you (comparing yourself)**

**That Psalm 73:1-12 – 17X he uses they or their – they get this, they do that, their bodies this, their life – they, they, they…**

**Sometimes we do the same – look what they do – their time, money, life, actions, their parties… others are having fun.**

**Psalm 73:13 Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. (I do what is right, and I’m still lonely, poor, and struggling - nothing!) 14 All day long I have been afflicted, and every morning brings new punishments. (I hear tormenting conviction in my mind – they hear nothing)**

**Do you notice the shift from “they” to “I”**

**\*\* Focusing on self will only disappoint you (counting your trials)**

**I am doing all these things – living a certain way – and I’m the one missing out… 6X – “I, I, I…” - in two verses.**

**Asaph went from looking at others to looking at himself – his world just got smaller. The number of people over the years who have said things like this… and missed out on God’s goodness.**

**Commercials on TV – Apparently, I need to change my watch – not only do people want to be around you, but they’re going to want to take off their clothes around you… I need to change my car, clothes, etc.**

**Psalm 73:13 Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. (I do what is right – what do I get out of it? We sometimes treat God like a purchase or personal investment)**

**73:15 If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed your children. (If I had told anyone how I feel, it would have discouraged those around me. I can’t talk about it, I am a leader…)**

**If the people knew my thoughts, they would think badly of me. Sadly, we’ve got to a place where we can’t talk about our struggles**

**\*\*\* But Asaph did, He wrote this song and handed it out. Imagine singing this… Surely God is good… I want to be like the wicked… Why am I living for God???? In the key of Em, please.**

**16 When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me. (If it ended there – that’s the place this worship guy lost his job... he crashed and burned… But it doesn’t end there) 17 Then (till) I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. (In the presence of God, he gets it)**

* + **He gets in the presence of God.**
  + **He focuses on the purpose of God.**
  + **His presence is found in prayer, the word, and worship.**

**Then his attention changes - Psalm 73:18 Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. 19 How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! 20 As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O LORD, you will despise them as fantasies. (Wow - dark, but true)**

**Being in His presence, we focus on His purposes**

**We are broken and ready to listen – When we focus on God’s will…**

**1. We see an eternal perspective**

**When I looked out there (the world), I got depressed.**

**When I looked in (at me – a victim mentality), I got disappointed.**

**But when I looked up (to the LORD), I got a bigger picture**

**We see all those things are just temporary – fantasies that leave you in ruins… chasing popularity, money, clothes, women, men, pleasure.**

**This life is a short brief distraction in eternity. When I see you, God, I understand eternity. You, God, are eternal – this will all fade.**

**Why trade 20 min or 20 yrs - for the following 20 billion?**

**Next thing he sees - Psalm 73:21 When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, 22 I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.**

**When I got in your presence, I realized I was acting like a dumb cow, eating and looking for more, just getting fat for the slaughter.**

**2. We see who we really are**

**We see our foolishness and in need of help.**

**Elijah in God’s presence – “woe is me…”**

**Eye-opening moments – I traded one night and lost my marriage – that date I traded my future – I sold my soul for money and work and lost my family – I tried that narcotic and woke up in the hospital – I pursued my desires and ended up in prison… I fell so far from God.**

**Before God, I see who I am… ignorant, prideful, and ridiculous.**

**Sometimes we see it with a mountain of regret behind us.**

**A clear view of God leads to a clear understanding of our sinful nature.**

**We see an eternal perspective, we see who we really are, then…**

**Psalm 73:23 Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. 24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.**

**3. We see a glimpse of who He faithfully is**

**Break down the verse**

**I am always with you - Omnipresent even when we don’t see it**

**You will never leave me!**

**You hold me by my right hand – Omnipotent even when we don’t feel it**

**You will never let go of me (right hand, I am holding tight).**

**You guide me with counsel- Omniscient even when we don’t understand it**

**You will never leave me wandering without direction.**

**You will take me to glory – Faithful and good – when all is said and done**

**You will never let me fall away from you. I’m secure to the end.**

**(He starts out with “they's” and “I’s” – but then he sees God’s goodness – and the “You’s” to God out number them all – 13X from 18-28) Psalm 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (A beautiful verse, read again. God is my portion = what I get) 27 Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.**

**4. We see what we truly have**

**In Jesus – you have all you need in this life and the next.**

**You may have money, cars, house, sex, all the drugs you want… but you will never feel full. And apart from Jesus – not only will you never be full - but you will find out after life - you were a fool**

**Psalm 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.**

**Nothing in this life or eternity compares to you!**

**No one else can do that!! Can we really say that?**

**\*\*Do we want the one who blesses or just his blessings?**

**He ends with a powerful statement!**

**He started out saying, “But as for me, my feet had almost slipped…” (I nearly quit - but then as he looks to God and ends with…) 28 But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD (Adoni Yahweh) my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.**

**Good = satisfying, beautiful, sweet, pleasing**

**Near to God = literally, the nearness of God – the approach of God. God coming to us – we see this in Jesus!**

**Refuge = the place I find shelter, safety, and sanctuary.**

**He grew up in church – leading in church – but had to come to a place of surrender to the LORD. I won’t wait for my friends or family… as for me… I will declare him LORD of my life!**

**Now I know I really know you – I’m not just singing about you.**

**This song is a testimony song.**

**5. We see how the world needs this**

**He ends with - I will tell of all your deeds!**

**When you truly meet Jesus, you can’t be quiet. You want to tell everyone how good he is. That is where Asaph was.**

**In the presence of God - I see what I really have.**

**LORD - I can be near you – through Jesus, I have you.**

**Sometimes I think God wears a “I’m with stupid” T-shirt next to me. Like Asaph, You / me / we are one stupid choice away from throwing in the towel – quitting – giving up – getting bitter and leaving… but in spite of that – God never leaves.**

**Asaph – is telling us – I looked out there (the world) – and I looked in here (myself) – then I looked up there (to the God of eternity) – and I found out what I was looking for all along!**

**Psalms 73:28 But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.**

**Asaph says – I can’t just sing another song today. I almost slipped up the other day and threw in the towel… but God met me and rescued me.**

**Have you ever felt that way? Maybe you feel that way now. God is good and faithful; He can give you the strength to not throw in the towel.**

**Paul, struggling with staying strong – battling inside between right and wrong writes - Romans 7:24 What a wretched man I am! (ever felt that way?) Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God – it is through Jesus Christ our Lord!**

**You may wonder - How do you get to the presence of God?**

**Only one way – JESUS!**