

God is the Strength of My Heart and My Portion Forever

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ու իմ Բաժիսս Յաւիտեան

Psalm 73

When I read this Psalm, it hit me as if it describes what happened to us Armenians. One hundred and six years passed since the Genocide; the collective pain of the massacres was reignited when seven months ago (September 26, 2020) Turkey and Azerbaijan invaded Artsakh and Armenia. We lost the war, we lost thousands of young soldiers, and we have more than 200 prisoners of war in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. And the unjust situation continues when the world is silent about it.

Thus, God's word helped me to be encouraged and encourage you. I chose Psalm 73

- Surely God is good to Israel,
to those who are pure in heart.
- ² But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;
I had nearly lost my foothold.
- ³ For I envied the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
- ⁴ **They** have no struggles;
their bodies are healthy and strong.
- ⁵ **They** are free from common human burdens;
they are not plagued by human ills.
- ⁶ Therefore pride is **their** necklace;
they clothe themselves with violence.
- ⁷ From **their** callous hearts comes iniquity;
their evil imaginations have no limits.
- ⁸ **They** scoff, and speak with malice;
with arrogance they threaten oppression.
- ⁹ **Their** mouths lay claim to heaven,
and **their** tongues take possession of the earth.
- ¹⁰ Therefore **their** people turn to them
and drink up waters in abundance.

- 11 **They** say, "How would God know?
Does the Most High know anything?"
- 12 This is what the wicked are like—
always free of care, they go on amassing wealth.
- 13 Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure
and have washed my hands in innocence.
- 14 All day long I have been afflicted,
and every morning brings new punishments.

Asaph, the psalmist describes similar situation where the arrogant and the wicked prosper. We see words like pride, violence, callous hearts, evil imagination, arrogance, and oppression. Also, they are mocking God, verse 11, "**How would God know? Does the Most High know anything?**"

This is not a political sermon. This is the Word of God where Asaph is describing "wicked" people around him, and it seems they are winning, becoming prosperous, and they don't care about anything.

Who is the author?

Asaph. He was one of the primary musicians of the Temple.

In 1st Chronicles 15, his relatives elected him to be one of the three primary singers in the temple.

In 1st Chronicles 16, David appointed Asaph, to be the superintendent of music and ministries at the Temple.

This man was a great musician, a man of God.

It was to Asaph that David gave his songs to be adapted to Temple.

If this man was asking God those questions, how about us?

It hit me when I read it again and again.

Asaph's eyes were only seeing **THEM**.

"They" and "their" is used 13 times in 9 verses.

It strikes me to look to our latest war and lament. Of course, I do feel the sorrow of the mothers who lost their kids in the war. I do feel the pain of people who saw corrupt leadership in our nation. I do feel with these people.

Let me go back to our Psalm today.

Asaph, our psalmist was a man of God;

He is surprised that those people are prosperous.
He knew Psalm 1 very well.

**Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers. (vs1)**

**For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction. (vs6)**

Asaph wants to see that “the way of the wicked leads to destruction....”
It seems he was surrounded with those people who he describes. He lost his
peace with God when he lost his focus.
He saw only “them” and “they”.

Now, second part of the Psalm is the turning point

¹⁶If I had spoken out like that,
I would have betrayed your children.
¹⁶When I tried to understand all this,
it troubled me deeply
¹⁷till I entered the sanctuary of God;
then I understood their final destiny.
¹⁸Surely you place them on slippery ground;
you cast them down to ruin.
¹⁹How suddenly are they destroyed,
completely swept away by terrors!
²⁰They are like a dream when one awakes;
when you arise, Lord,
you will despise them as fantasies.
²¹When my heart was grieved
and my spirit embittered,
²²I was senseless and ignorant;
I was a brute beast before you.
²³Yet I am always with you;
you hold me by my right hand.
²⁴You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will take me into glory.
²⁵Whom 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.

²⁷ Those who are far from you will perish;
you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.

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. (Psalm 73:16-28 NIV11)

The turning point started when he evaluated himself.
Like what can he teach to his children?

**If I had spoken out like that,
I would have betrayed your children.**

¹⁶ **When I tried to understand all this,
it troubled me deeply** (73:15,16 NIV11)

What would he teach to the next generation?

What kind of legacy would he leave?

All the prosperity in v.3-14 is about the abundance of material things.

-Is this what we teach our children?

“Make material gain the highest good and get it any way you can have, even if
you have to run over others.”

-Is this most important thing in life?

There is something wrong in our priorities here.

Things start looking different when Asaph meets God

¹⁷ **till I entered the sanctuary of God;
then I understood their final destiny.** (Psalm 73:17 NIV11)

He went to a **place where God could meet him.**

Here is the good news:

In his dilemma, in his perplexity, in his confusion, and in his pain, **he did not
abandon God,**

But,

he went to the place where **he could meet God, and God could meet him.**

This means he could **get some perspective.**

Brothers and sisters, may I ask you this morning, when you are confused, disappointed, this is the time when you make an effort to see God. God can renew your sight, can give you a new perspective.

When we are down, your mind does not see anything new and fresh and godly. As if God is not in control, and the “enemy” is.

**When my heart was grieved
and my spirit embittered,**

²² I was senseless and ignorant;

I was a brute beast before you. (Psalm 73:21,22 NIV11)

When you are down, you don't see anything. You also become bitter...

Until you meet with God...

-It is like Isaiah who saw God (Isaiah 6) and said: “Holy, Holy Holy...”. Isaiah saw who he is: **Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips.**” (Isa 6:5 NIV11)

Or like Peter who encountered with Jesus' divine presence. After failing and not catching fish, Peter was instructed by Jesus to fish again. When Peter caught fish, abundant fish, he said to Jesus **“Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”** (Luke 5:8 NIV11)

God meets man, man meets God....

It happened in my life. When Jesus came into my life, my perspective about life changed. Jesus gave me a new identity, a new purpose and a meaning in life.

Do I get angry when the “wicked” “win”? Of course.

But I learned that the final word is not theirs.

I learned that from my Lord Jesus.

He is the one who came and died on the cross. His suffering was not in vain.

His sacrifice was for you and me.

He faced “wicked” people who rejected him.

Yet, his resurrection is the evidence that death, sin, and wickedness are defeated.

That is why Paul could say:

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ

Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? (Romans 8:31-35 NIV11)

Let me finish with a stories that are evidence of God’s presence in our tragedy
Rosie Chakerian

Mother of Michael Chakerian and Aunt of Judge Ed Sarkissian

Born in Caesarea, Turkey, she had 2 brothers and sister. lost the young brother to illness.

- When she was 8 years old, in 1915, She remembers One day father came back troubled, they were killing and hanging men.
- Next They receive news that her father is exiled, all men under 60 were killed.
- Then the rest of them were deported.
- Upon leaving they locked the doors of the house, and gave the key to the soldiers.

The mother with her 3 children, and their grandfather along with 300 people.

- grandfather was so sick he could not continue. Before they left him behind, he confessed that their father was killed.

- they got close to Aleppo sheltered in an Armenian church filled with refugees.

-They were sent to live in Arab beduin village.

-The brother died there and she and her mother almost died. She was miraculously saved.

- She was going to be sold in marriage. But God miraculously saved her again.

-She was miraculously saved multiple times.

Her story is a testimony of God’s protection and grace.

“After my grandfather was taken away from me, I dedicated my life to the Lord. Just to live for him, nobody else.”

The other story is from a young soldier from Armenia 2020.

Here is a story of the Armenian Christian (born again, dedicated) soldier **Krikor**.

During the war he posted his memories and Sevan contacted him and he responded to her letters.

Here is a summary:

“During the war, I witnessed terrible situations. What we witnessed we have only seen in movies and thought it was exaggerated. From the first day, every moment we faced death, and we were only saved by miracles. We faced all kinds of very destructive and extremely dangerous weapons. During each attack we hid for at least 5-6 hours with, hoping to get out alive. Death was all around us. One day you would fight alongside your friend, the next day they would take away his body.

It is a miracle that I am alive today.”

“Until the last day of my life, I will tell how God rescued me.

In the Army, some ridiculed me that we started each day with prayer. For some this was ridiculous.

But when you live every day a dangerous life, when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, when you face death every moment, you don't pay attention to the people who are mocking you and mocking God who is our Lord and Savior.

The war ended....

I want to encourage you. Seek the Lord, he is alive, seek the Lord and you can find Him.

The key to get close to Him is faith. Believe that Jesus was crucified for you, believe that the Lord loves you. Seek God and repent from your sins. God is merciful and forgiving.

Our country is in a terrible situation now. Some people blame God, and some others blame the government. **No one blames themselves for living away from God.**

As a nation, we need to repent and return to God. As the bee gathers nectar from the flowers and not from garbage, we should feed our hearts with the knowledge of God and His Word. Return to the Lord, my nation.”

This is strong message from a soldier who came from the “hell” of war.

Here is my prayer.

Lord, let us turn to you. In our distress and questions, we turn to you.

We pray that we come to you in humility to be in a daily relationship with you.

We pray for our nation to turn to you.

Teach me oh God, that you are my strength of my heart, and my portion forever

Amen

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