

GOD, MY STRENGTH AND PORTION

Psalm 73:26

INTRODUCTION

- Hitting the wall is a condition that affects marathon runners, when they reach the limit of their endurance, their energy levels become so depleted that their muscles no longer can keep them running
- And more generally in life, people can reach a “breaking point”, whether it is spiritually, mentally, emotionally or physically
- The Psalmist here in the 73rd Psalm was in such a place
- The struggles and the stress of life had overwhelmed him to the point where his both his flesh and his heart failed
- For Asaph, it seems to be his soul more than his body that had failed under the strain
- He was struggling with the great question as to why the wicked seem to prosper (v.3)
- They appear to have successful lives, they have everything they want, they are in health, and even in death they seem to pass peacefully
- Often this is the case – from an earthly perspective, the ungodly seem to prosper, while God’s people struggle and suffer
- Some would even question, what advantage is there in righteousness? (v.13)
- But that is evaluating things from an earthly perspective, not heavenly
- It was when Asaph “went into the sanctuary of God” that he “understood their end” (vv.16-20)
- The wicked are only lifted up so that they will ultimately be cast down to destruction
- When we view the wicked from the perspective of eternity, we ought never envy them, but rather pity them
- In the process of Asaph’s crisis of faith, he came to understand how weak and frail he truly was, that both in his flesh and in his heart he was wholly incapable of overcoming the difficulties of life, and of passing through death into eternity
- And in his weakness and brokenness he turned to God for strength and deliverance, trusting in him to meet his deepest needs
- And this is the place that we all must come to – having our proud self-reliance shattered, seeing ourselves as we truly are – wretched, miserable, poor and blind and naked – and casting ourselves wholly upon Christ as our Saviour and Lord

Consider three essential truths that every person must learn:

I. I AM INHERENTLY WEAK AND FRAIL

- A. The Scriptures describe our true state
 - 1. We are dust (Psalm 103:14-16)
 - 2. We are as grass and flowers that wither and fall (1 Peter 1:24)
 - 3. We are vanity (Psalm 39:5)
 - 4. We are unclean (Isaiah 64:6)
 - 5. We are without strength (Romans 5:6)

- B. We are beset by countless afflictions of the body and soul
 - 1. It is estimated there are 100,000 diseases known to man
 - 2. This will only increase as human genetics continue to degrade (genetic entropy)
 - 3. Along with physical diseases, there are hundreds of mental disorders plaguing humanity
 - 4. All these are the result of man's first sin and the curse that brought upon the creation (Genesis 3)
 - 5. Regardless of how much we maintain our health, in due time our flesh and our hearts will fail, our mortal lives will end in death

- C. There is good that may result from our experiences of infirmity
 - 1. For most people, the worst thing they can experience is prosperity (2 Chronicles 26:16)
 - 2. Prosperity (physical, financial, social, etc) tends towards pride and self-reliance, giving us a false perception of ourselves
 - 3. Such a person in a state of prosperity is prone to forget the Lord, seeing no need of him (Proverbs 30:8-9; Hosea 13:6)
 - 4. But affliction has the effect of revealing our true weakness, powerlessness and helplessness
 - 5. See the wisdom and providence of God: though suffering is a consequence of man's sin and the curse, yet God is able to use it for righteousness' sake
 - 6. Pentecostals falsely claim that it is not God's will for us to be sick and afflicted
 - 7. Job's friends and wife had the same misconception: "If you were righteous, you would not be suffering!"

8. But Job was wiser than them all: “What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” (Job 2:10)
9. God sent Paul a thorn in his flesh for the purpose of weakening him, and causing him to rely only on the grace of God as his strength (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
10. “But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead” (2 Corinthians 1:8-10)
11. No one ever came to Christ in their strength and prosperity, but only in their weakness and poverty (Psalm 40:17)

II. GOD IS MY ONLY STRENGTH

- A. “But God” – see the stark contrast between man’s weakness and God’s power
 1. We must learn to insert a “but God” into every circumstance of life, which will transform how we view them and how we handle them (Genesis 50:20; Acts 13:29-30; 1 Corinthians 10:13)
 2. My flesh and my heart fail, all seems dark and hopeless, my sins are driving me down to the depths of hell and I am utterly powerless to deliver myself...BUT GOD in his mercy and grace reaches down and plucks me from the pit and from the flames and gives me pardon, life, hope and strength!
- B. God is the believer’s “rock” to which he flees for refuge
 1. The Hebrew word for “strength” is literally “rock”, as in a fortress (Psalm 18:2; 61:2)
- C. God is our strength in everything we need and for everything we will face
 1. He is our physical strength, providing for all our temporal needs in this life (Matthew 6:11,33)
 2. He is our soul’s strength, equipping us by his Spirit to renounce sin, to walk in righteousness, and stand against our enemies in the spiritual war (Isaiah 40:29-31; 41:10; Ephesians 3:16; Colossians 1:11)
 3. He is our strength in death (Psalm 73:24)

III. GOD IS MY ONLY PORTION

- A. To those who are saved, God becomes their inheritance
 1. The word for “portion” means a share of an inheritance (Psalm 16:5-6)
 2. For unbelievers, they have a different portion – in the material things of this life in this world which are all removed at their death (Psalm 17:14)
 3. The blessed result of salvation is not only that the believer is God’s, but also that God is the believer’s – “I am his, and he is mine”

4. The mark of a Christian is that God is his portion – not family, friends, possessions, fame – but God alone is my life, my love, my joy, my hope, my all
5. Christ is not merely something I add to my crowded life, no, he is my everything, so that all other loves become as “hate” in comparison (Luke 14:26)

B. He is the believer’s eternal portion

1. To have God as my strength and portion forever means that nothing, not even death itself can harm me (Psalm 23:4)
2. Indeed, it is at the moment of death, when all else is stripped away and we are face to face with the last enemy, that our true strength and portion is manifest
3. The blessedness of heaven for the believer lies not in all the glorious things that will be found there – the mansions, the holy city, the golden street, the pearly gates, the tree of life, the holy angels, as wonderful as they are
4. No, the chief glory of heaven, and the supreme desire of the Christian is God himself, and the Lamb – God is his portion in that glorious place (Revelation 21:3-4)

CONCLUSION

1. How do you see yourself? As a good person? Or as a wretched, hell-deserving sinner?
2. There is no hope for you until you have a true sight and sense of your sinfulness and cry out, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”
3. How do you see the afflictions of this life? As unwelcome intruders to your comfort? Or as blessings from God to sanctify you and cause you to trust in him?
4. Can you say, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.” (Psalm 119:67)
5. Can you say, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.” (Psalm 119:71)
6. God’s people throughout the ages are those who, “out of weakness were made strong” (Hebrews 11:34)
7. They were made strong by the God they trusted in
8. What is the source of your strength?
9. And what is your portion? What is the all-consuming desire of your heart?
10. Can you say with Asaph, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.” (Psalm 73:25)