

Envy: The Voice of Evaluation

How Life Feels - part 9

Book of Psalms

June 14, 2020

DAY 1: 5 factors that play into envy

1. Envy is a sin.

*Psalms 37:1 Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong;
²for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.*

2. Envy springs from comparison to others.

2 Corinthians 10:12 We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.

3. Envy is “keeping score” by a metric where we’re guaranteed to lose!

Psalms 37:7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

4. Envy can morph into pride or discouragement. We may not associate or even recognize envy as a cause of discouragement!

Psalms 37:1 Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong;

5. Envy is the natural result of giving ultimate value to something other than God.

Colossians 3:5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

a. Implications: We confess our sin of envy when it crops up, but envy is like weeds. If you clip them off at ground level they grow back. Envy is like that. As long as we place ultimate value in a person (spouse, child, parent, boss, etc.) or station in life (married, single, “happy family,” successful, “enough money to pay the bills,” etc.) or pleasant circumstances (little drama, no major problems, not having to struggle so much, etc.) we WILL envy when we see others who have what we don’t have. The problem is not others. The problem is idolatry. We create envy.

b. What do you find yourself “pining” for that someone else has?

c. Many times what we “DESIRE” is a legitimate desire. But envy “tells us” that we have perverted that desire into a “NEED” that someone or something other than God *should/ought to/must* meet. What strikes you most about envy?

DAY 2: Envy: comparing myself to those doing “better” than I am

*Psalms 73:1 **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**.*

1. Asaph wrote this psalm. He is devoted to God but he is struggling with doubts about God.

Doubts occur when our theology runs into painful reality.

2. Psalm 73:1 is true. But as Asaph will discover HOW God is good is up to God, not us.

3. Do you hear a “quid pro quo” in Asaph’s statement in v. 1?

4. Have you had an expectation that if you do what’s right (pure heart) you’ll see a particular kind of goodness and blessings in your life?

5. For Asaph, the reality that shook him up was that the “wrong people” seemed to be experiencing the blessings of God more than he was! Who were the “wrong people” in v. 3?

Psalms 73:4 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.*

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.*

6. Asaph is experiencing different kinds of **disillusionment**:

- a. The prosperity of the wicked,
- b. The apparent ease of the wicked.

Psalms 73:9 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 can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?"*

¹² *This is what the wicked are like-- always carefree, they increase in wealth.*

- c. These folks think they not only can get away with evil...
- d. ...but also believe they’ll be in heaven!
- e. People follow them!
- f. They flaunt God.

7. Have you had some of these experiences with doubt and disillusionment?

8. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: Envy: comparing myself to those who don't seem to struggle as much as I do.

1. Up until this point Asaph's comparison has focused on how "good" the wicked and arrogant seem to have it.

- a. More prosperity
- b. A pretty easy life
- c. They seem to do whatever they want without fear of punishment.
- d. They flaunt God.

2. But now Asaph's focus shifts to how hard his life seems to be in comparison to there's!

Psalms 73:13 Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence.

3. Put verse 13 in your own words.

Psalm 73:14 All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning.

4. Put verse 14 in your own words.

5. Envy produces disillusionment: What good is it to follow God?

- a. Others seem to be doing better than I am.
- b. Others don't seem to have as hard a life as I do.

Psalm 73:15: If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed your children.

¹⁶ *When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me ...*

6. Asaph realizes that if he were to voice these doubts to others he would damage their faith.

7. Asaph kept trying to wrap his mind around this. He couldn't understand what was going on to his satisfaction. He says, "It was *oppressive* to me." The word "oppressive" means it was a maddening riddle or puzzle that he could not solve.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: Eternal destiny

Psalm 73:16 When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me until I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.

1. All the “data” Asaph had been comparing turned out to be the wrong data—by a country mile!
2. Judging the value of following God during a very short seventy years is a drop in the ocean compared to enjoying God forever in heaven, or, badly regretting not following God forever in hell!

3. Asaph is locked into the present. God tells him to see the future. Evaluating life with God based on this life is not an exact science. Because we live in a fallen world, tragedy hits everyone sometime. Heartache may be just hours away. But when you look from heaven’s viewpoint, the life’s pleasant valleys say nothing about someone’s final destiny and its horrors.

Psalm 73:18 Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors!

4. Nobody gets away with sin. Nobody gets away with greed or stinginess. Nobody gets away with selfishness or being unloving. Nobody gets away with lying or telling white lies. The surest reality of the universe is that everyone will face God, and justice will be complete and righteous.

Psalms 73:20 (RSV) They are like a dream when one awakes, on awaking you despise their phantoms.

5. The “phantoms” God despises are the fantasies and proud lies people chased after, and devoted themselves to which have ended up in misery.

6. As the fog of confusion clears about God’s goodness and people’s madness, he sees new layers of his own badness.

*Psalms 73:21 When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart,
²² I was stupid and ignorant, I was like a beast toward thee.*

7. But, rather than continue on as the wicked do in their madness, Asaph is convicted of his sin and repents. This is the way ever forward!

8. What strikes you about today’s devotional?

DAY 5: The dividing line is clearly drawn

*Psalms 73:21 When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart,
²² I was stupid and ignorant, I was like a beast toward thee.*

1. Remember what else Asaph realized. He realized his own ugliness toward God. How would God respond? God loves our repentance!

2. Asaph's belief in the goodness of God is not just a theological truth. It is an intensely personal truth! Listen to these incredible words...

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

3. What strikes you about this verse?

Psalms 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And being with you, I desire nothing on earth.

4. What strikes you about this verse?

5. How does Asaph's perspective on envy (and desire) change?

Psalms 73:26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

6. Even when Asaph is plagued by doubts what does he realize about his weakened faith?

Psalms 73:27 Those who are far from you will perish ...

7. To "perish" means more than dying. Everyone will physically die. The word "perish" in this context means to lose out on any of the satisfaction that you sought for all your life. In hell, there will be no satisfaction. No love. No joy. No hope. Ever.

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.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?