

Episode 115

I am on trial because of my hope in the fulfillment of God's promise made to our ancestors.

- Acts 26.6

Centuries ago, Paul stood before judge and jury to defend himself against his accusers who wanted him dead. Here we have his summary of what he was on trial for - the hope he had in God fulfilling his promises.

I believe one of the reasons why we live as undercover Christians is because we too have been in one of these trials. Sometimes it's others asking us mockingly where this God is that we serve and how we could believe in him when our lives fall apart the way they do. At other times we are the accuser, examining our own life, and asking the same question. We look at how the wicked succeed, while honoring God only seems to end in missed opportunities and failed ventures.

This inner wrestle and outer persecution is nothing new. In fact, dozens of Psalms capture our attempt to find God hidden in the middle of this confusion, and dozens more expound on the difficulty of answering those around us who ask 'where is your God' as we lose hope in ever seeing this covenant-making God, fulfill his promises.

Psalm 73 is one of my favourites, and I want to quote most of it to help encourage you if this is where you are today.

God is good to Israel, to those whose hearts are pure. But as for me, I almost lost my footing. My feet were slipping, and I was almost gone. For I envied the proud when I saw them prosper despite their wickedness. They seem to live such painless lives; their bodies are so healthy and strong. They don't have troubles like other people; they're not plagued with problems like everyone else. Instead, they scoff and speak only evil; in their pride, they seek to crush others. They boast against your heavens, and their words strut throughout the earth. And so your people are dismayed and confused, drinking in all their words. "What does God really know?" they ask. "Does the Most High even care about what's happening?"

Look at these wicked people, enjoying a life of ease while their riches multiply. Did I keep my heart pure for nothing? Did I keep myself innocent for no reason? I get nothing but trouble all day long; every morning brings me pain. If I had told my friends at church what I was feeling, I would have been seen as a traitor to your people.

So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper. But what a difficult task it is! Then I went into your sanctuary, O God, and I finally understood the destiny of the wicked. Truly, you put them on a slippery path and send them sliding over the cliff to destruction. In an instant they are destroyed, completely swept away by terrors.

Then I realized that my heart was bitter, and I was all torn up inside. I was so foolish and short-sighted, yet you never let go of my hand. Even now, you guide me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny. My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever. And as for me? How good it is to be near God!

ONE33