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# Deliverance from Idolatry > Restoration

## Psalm 73:15-28

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### Introduction

Life under God and interpreted by God is not as bad as you think. Oh, I know, life can be hard. There are difficulties and deadlines that press upon us. There are disappointments and depression that fatigue the body. Inconvenience and nuisance pester an otherwise good life. And the awful moments of unannounced tragedy crash in and devastate loved ones. If these things were not so you likely would not look at idolatry as something attractive. But I want you to know that reality is not as bad as you may think. And before our time tonight is over, I hope you will have a view of life that says the same.

This month on Sunday evenings we have been exploring together idolatry. The title of the series is *Not Idle about Idols, living alert among idols in purity with purpose*. What we've said thus far is that an idol of the heart is anything/one that we value equal to or greater than Jesus Christ. This would mean that our allegiance and affections have been misplaced. We took our heart off of Christ and put it on something/one that seemed to be (at the time) more promising. As a result our desire for this good thing (or otherwise) was treated as an ultimate thing and now we are ruled by and driven by this desire for a person, activity, substance or idea.

Using Psalm 73 as our map we noticed the Psalmist seduced by his chosen idol. We watched the movement of a heart seduced in order to gain insight over temptation/seduction. That was message #1.

Next, we traced the Psalmist's movement to observe the results of idolatry. This message was chilling for me. It took us into a deadness of the senses that was described as "a beast". We said of this description that it reflected a larger understanding of idolatry dating back to Genesis 3 and seen poignantly in Exodus 32 and the golden calf. Our summary of this dynamic was "we become what we worship".

Tonight is much more pleasant than last week's message. Tonight we get to complete the series and the Psalm by noticing a heart seduced, reduced and then brought back. Tonight we will look at God's restoration of his people.

To do this let's first pray.

### **Synopsis of 3 moves in Psalm 73 – seduced, reduced, brought back**

Let's begin our closing message by recapping the three moves of Ps.73 in order to remind ourselves of why we are doing this series.

Psalm 73 is somewhat of a summary of the entire Psalter (i.e. Psalms 1-150). It could be viewed as an outline of the Israelite history – close to God, far away from God and brought back to God.

But the more I thought on the Psalter and Ps.73 the more I sensed that Ps.73 could function as a digest of the whole Bible – how it moves from order and orientation to disorder and disorientation and then back into order and orientation. Isn't that kind of movement and patterns we see in our entire Bible?

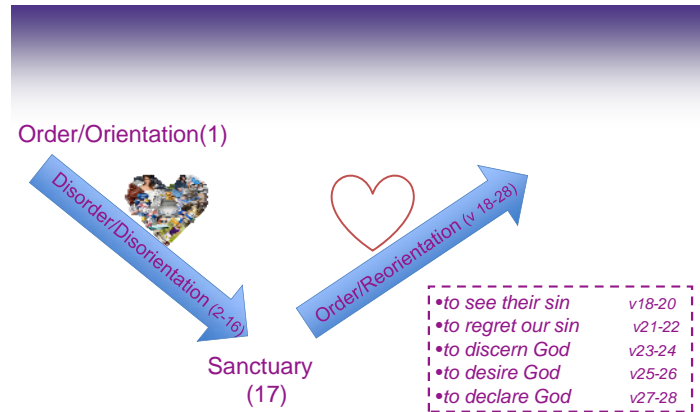
And as I thought of the storyline of the Bible I began to think about my own storyline and how it is the same in theme as yours. How in Adam we started in order with no chaos and enjoying an orientation of life that was innocent and wonderful. But as Adam rebelled and plunged the human race into depravity and death we lost our innocence and are sinners by birth.

This nature distorts everything. Outside of Christ, we no longer have an order and orientation on life. We experience disorder and disarray in desire. We pine and covet and lust. We want not to be ruled but to

rule and treat ourselves to what we want. We cannot save ourselves. We need a Savior. We must be rescued by him if we are to enjoy order and orientation.

Sin is awful. It's awful because of how it treats God. It defames His precious name. It deforms His image. It destroys human happiness. And it is deceptively delightful. This makes sin absolutely awful.

This 3-fold movement<sup>1</sup> in our Psalm, in the Psalter, in the Bible and in our lives can be depicted by the slide on the screen. <Trace the movement with an eye on purpose of series>



Recall back a few weeks when we started this series. We said that the point of the series was to assist personal growth and ministry. Regarding pg (talk about transformation and maturation occur through repentance and faith). Regarding pm( talk about how Ps.73 can function as a map or lens or GPS assisting us in our ministry with others – both discipleship and evangelism).

### Analysis of 3<sup>rd</sup> move in Psalm 73

v15-28

To gain help in personal growth and personal ministry listen to how the Psalmist was restored. <read v15-28>. Though I do not believe this text was inspired to give us the only way a disoriented person becomes reoriented, I do think, however, it is instructive and helps our understanding of people and ministry.

#### Agitation

v15-16

Picking up the text in v15 we notice the Psalmist agitated. He seems troubled. He wanted to just walk away having concluded that God was unfair and the arrogant were attractive. But he can't. His heart won't let him. In v.15-16 notice with me why he is unsettled and why there is evidence of hope.

#### Hurting the covenant community

v15

In v15 he stops himself from going public with his thoughts. That is, up to this time his description of the arrogant and the desire of their life were in his thought life. In v15 we read "if I had said, 'I will speak thus'. He tells us that he had not spread his interpretation around. The word 'thus' points back to v4-14 and the inaccurate interpretation of the wicked. Sanity starts to come back when he thinks about the consequences of his rebellion on the next generation. Hurting the community of the faith brought about restlessness and a starting of sobriety that led him to do v16.

<sup>1</sup> This idea coupled with its nomenclature first came to me from Dr. Brueggemann's book on the Psalms. I'm indebted to his good work.

## Futile self-reliance

v16

He was not happy with his thought life. He imagined talking the way he was thinking. This brought anxiety to him. How could he proceed with such awful thoughts and hurt the next generation of God's people.

And so, he considers the outcome of his deplorable belief and wants and begins counseling himself. He tries on his own to figure out what happened in his soul. Why does he crave evil? What motive would draw him to the desirable, attractive, alluring and wicked people? Why would he want to follow the beautiful and brutal outside the covenant community? As he tries to figure out why he is so screwed up, he becomes wearisome. He labors in his futile self-reliance with little success...that is until v17. We see our Psalmist abort self-reliance and do something everyone must do in order for sanity to return. He enters the sanctuary of God.

## Revelation

v17

v17 is the pivot point in the poem. The word 'until' should be circled in your Bibles. This turning point for the psalmist is the turning point for every human being who turns. Entering the holy place where God's holiness and the man's hope meet. The sinner is brought to repentance in the holy place. Life for him now was before the face of God. In the sanctuary he found both redemption and revelation; both God's presence and his pardon. He experienced reconciliation. Now, the Truth he had accepted as reality before was reality again. In the sanctuary reorientation promoted a perspective that can see life as it really is. V18-28 outlines for us what this type of reorientation does. It promotes no less than five wonderful things.

## Reorientation

v18-28

1. **Views the future of the wicked** (v.18-20). It was easy now for the psalmist to stop pursuing the alluring alternatives. He can now see! His view of the future of the wicked stopped his desire for their lifestyle.
2. **Grants grief over personal sin** (v.21-22). It was easy (though painful) now for the psalmist to be sad over his stupid and rebellious infatuation. He could see how far he had drifted. He was able to notice the sub-human desires and actions he had. This grieved him deeply. This grief gave rise to a repentance that carries no regret.
3. **Gives capacity to discern God in the midst of the mess** (v.23-24). Please do not miss this. These verses are some of the best in the Bible. Notice the psalmist as he now is able to see where God was *when* he was rebelling. The expression "I am continually with You" introduces a foundational truth. This statement is not a resolution but rather a statement of fact. In other words, the psalmist is talking about God's faithfulness not the psalmist's fidelity. He did not credit the change to his determination. The talk shifts to the pronoun "You" telling us that the speaker sees himself not as an agent of change but as a recipient of grace. YOU HOLD (cling to, cleave to, grasp), YOU GUIDE (direct, steer, lead) & THEN RECEIVE (collect, accept, justify) ME – WOW! To fully understand repentance we must understand it to be a gift and not an achievement.
4. **Fuels desire for God** (v.25-26). The psalmist came to see that his strength and portion is found only in the LORD. Out of transformed perspective comes transformed passion. Out of this type of reorientation springs forth a (re)celebration of God's matchless beauty. When we have climbed the mountain of lust and have been reduced to ashes and dust, when we've tried through raw determination to stop, when we've consulted self and toiled to figure out life apart from the community of believers, as God grants repentance enabling us to tap into the joy of our union with Christ when all this occurs we do not want to do anything contrary to God's heart. Rather, we long to be close to him. We long to make much of him. We long to experience v27-28.
5. **Fortifies resolve to declare the gospel** (v.27-28). Here in v27-28 we see lastly what reorientation promotes. We have come full circle by noticing the contrast with v.2.

At the outset of this psalm the goodness of God seemed like a farce. Now, the goodness of God is realized as good. He now firmly is convinced that distance from God leads to death. And nearness to God leads to life. This is shorthand for the gospel. He will now unashamedly tell of all God's works (pointing to and ending in Jesus Christ).

To try to bring this series to a close think with me over some questions.

1. How might you use Psalm 73 to serve **a discontented saint**?
  - a. What questions might you ask regarding his/her restlessness?
  - b. How will you paint a picture of what he/she is missing?
  - c. Where will you guide him/her in view of Psalm 73?
2. How might you use Psalm 73 to serve **a discouraged sufferer**?
  - a. What insights about God can you offer?
  - b. What are some practical ways you can demonstrate the goodness of God?
3. How might you use Psalm 73 to serve **a deadened sinner**?
  - a. How can you depict the beauty of Christ in this Psalm?
  - b. With restoration/rescue as a category, look for false rescuers in your friend's life. Talk about them. Bend the conversation to the only Rescuer, Ruler, Redeemer.
  - c. When will you talk about clearly the justice of God?