



SUCCESS

AND THE **SHAPE**

OF LIFE

The Problem of Pain

Psalm 73:1-28

SUCCESS AND THE SHAPE OF LIFE

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.

⁴ They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong.

Psalm 73:1-28

SUCCESS AND THE SHAPE OF LIFE

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.

Psalm 73:1-28

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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?"

Psalm 73:1-28

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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.

Psalm 73:1-28

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¹⁵ 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

¹⁷ till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.

¹⁸ Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin.

Psalm 73:1-28

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¹⁹ How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors!

²⁰ They are like a dream when one awakes; when you arise, Lord, you will despise them as fantasies.

²¹ When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered,

²² I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.

Psalm 73:1-28

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²³ Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand.

²⁴ You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

Psalm 73:1-28

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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.

**TIME HEALS
ALL WOUNDS**



“A sum can be put right—but only by going back till you find the error and working it afresh from that point—never by simply going on. Evil can be undone, but it cannot “develop” into good. Time does not heal it.”

(C.S. Lewis)

“I’ve come to believe that there is no *true* healing from our pains and addictions except through the redemptive power of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Only through this power—what AA famously calls “higher power”—will anyone be able to break truly free from the past and walk, however tentatively, into Jesus’ promise of new life... For humanity’s deepest, most primal pain, I truly believe that ultimately only Jesus’ love can redeem it into beauty.” (Pete Portal)

“How you deal with pain may well be the most significant factor in how your life will pan out. The things you revert to for contentment in response to the question *What shall I do with my pain?* will probably define the person you become. It will also define whether your pain is *transformed* into something useful, beautiful, productive (aka “successful”), or whether it’s *transferred* to others, calcifying into bitterness, sickness, and broken relationships.” (Pete Portal)

He is honest about how uneasy and upended he feels.

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His primary pain is his envy of the prosperity of the wicked.

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He lays out some of his biggest observations via complaint.

He is honest about how uneasy and upended he feels.

His primary pain is his envy of the prosperity of the wicked.

He lays out some of his biggest observations via complaint.

He returns to the front-row view of his own pain and frustration.

Asaph has given us a great gift of the internal monologue of pain processing.

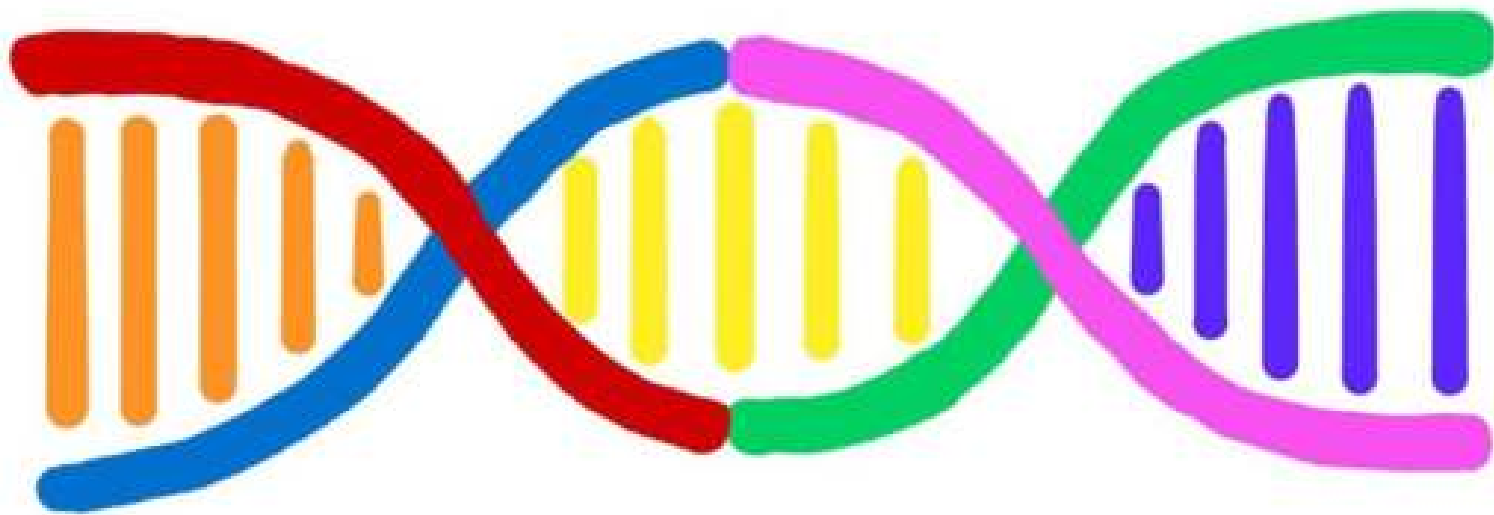


“If I had spoken out like that... I would have betrayed your children.”

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Asaph acknowledges that his pain could have very easily been thrust outward and had harmful effects on his relationships.

WHAT IS EPIGENETICS?



“Addiction is very often a sincere attempt to solve the problem of pain... In a sense, we are all addicts. It’s just that our drug of choice—work, food, shopping, chardonnay, social media, the approval of others, and so on—may be socially acceptable. All addictive things, from cocaine to social media, stimulate the neurotransmitter dopamine.”

(Pete Portal)

“In today’s culture we’re assaulted with a hyperabundance of products and devices to distract us from pain and reward us for using them... All day long we carry around our “modern-day hypodermic needle,” the smartphone, available around the clock to administer that on-demand dopamine hit.”

(Pete Portal)

Psalm 103:1, 5



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Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name... who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

"We have learned ways to mask our insecurity, fear, loneliness, or despair. And as most of us have not learned healthy ways to deal with our pain, and we don't live in a world that encourages us to face our brokenness, we adapt by looking for whatever we can to distract or numb us."

(Pete Portal)

"All this, it troubled me deeply, till I entered the sanctuary of God..." (v. 16-17)



Asaph remembers that God is just... even if it doesn't seem like it in the moment.

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God does not abandon us in our pain.

“The Christian life isn’t just a one-time event. Salvation involves having an encounter leading to a choice; but faithfully following Jesus after that involves making choices that lead to encounters.”

(Pete Portal)

Closing Reflections



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What kind of pain have you experienced lately, or are you experiencing right now? Are you transferring that pain, or seeking to have it transformed?

Closing Reflections



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Ask the Spirit to reveal any addictions or coping habits that you're using to numb or mask your pain.

Closing Reflections



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Invite God to move in your life to change you in deep ways so that future generations don't inherit the complications of your pain.

Closing Reflections



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Give thanks that in spite of—and in the midst of—your pain, God is the strength of your heart and your portion forever.



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