

## **The heart of the issue**

For reading & meditation: Job 21:11-16

*"Yet they say ' Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him?' ' But their prosperity is not in their own hands '" (vv. 14-16)*

We come now to the heart of the issue with which the psalmist is struggling in Psalm 73: "Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning" (Psa.73:13-14). Permit me to paraphrase what I think he is saying: "Here I am, living a godly life, keeping my heart and hands clean, avoiding sin, meditating on the things of God and devoting myself to a life pleasing to God, yet despite this I am facing all kinds of troubles. What's the advantage in serving God if He doesn't protect me?" The problem, then, is not so much the prosperity of the wicked as the fact that he himself is passing through a period of great trial while they are getting off scot-free. We begin now to see the roots of the envy to which the psalmist referred earlier: "For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked" (v.3). Envy is born out of two things: ignorance and a wrong comparison. Take, first, a wrong comparison. "Almost all our problems," said Dr W.E. Sangster, "begin in a wrong comparison." How true this is. We compare our looks, our height, our income, our homes, our training and our abilities with those of others and soon we lose sight of our own individuality and specialness. To compare ourselves with Christ is a healthy spiritual discipline, but to indulge in comparison with those we think are more prosperous and fortunate than we are is the direct road to envy.

## **Prayer:**

O God, save me, I pray, from the habit of wrongly comparing myself with others. Help me to satisfy the impulse I have for making comparisons only in a way that will yield spiritual gain - by comparing myself only with You. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

## **For further study:**

Psalms 37:1-40; Proverbs 3:31

1. What is envy?
2. What is the result of envy?

By Selwyn Hughes at Every Day Light

