

Why Do The Wicked Prosper?

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[0:00] Welcome to our service this evening, particularly if you are visiting with us. I myself am visiting with you so I can't tell everybody who is local, and most of you, but I can't obviously recognise all the visitors.

So if you are visiting with us, it's lovely to have you with us. We're here to worship God and we're going to sing first of all from Psalm number one, the Scottish Psalter version of Psalm number one. We're going to be singing the whole of this psalm. It's a psalm that contrasts the righteous and the wicked, the believer and the unbeliever.

Psalm one, that man hath perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray in counsel of
ungodly men, nor stands in sinners' ways. Psalm one, the whole of the psalm, to God's
praise.

Psalm one, that man hath perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray in counsel of
ungodly men, nor stands in sinners' ways.

Psalm one, that man hath perfected, nor stands in sinners' ways.

[1 : 48] Upon God's love, upon God's love, and meditated, upon God's love, and meditated, upon His love, and meditated, on His love, day and night.

It shall be like a tree that grows, near planted by our earth.

[illegible]

In iudgment therefore shall not stand such as the Godly is.

Now in the assembly of the just shall we in the hand appear.

[4 : 07] For why the way of the man and the Lord is told?

Where as the wings of wicked man can't wait to know the earth of the moon.

Amen. Let's now call on the Lord's name in prayer. Let's stand. Let's draw near to God in prayer.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord we can't argue with that. But we do sometimes argue when we see the opposite happening. The wicked seeming to prosper while the righteous clearly struggling.

Lord that's what we'll be thinking about this evening from your word. So we pray that you would help us with it. We pray that you would steer us. Steer our minds, our thoughts, our responses, our reactions to your word this evening.

[5 : 53] That your Holy Spirit would be our teacher and our guide. We thank you Lord that you know our needs better than we know them ourselves. You know everything that goes on in our lives.

Even the things that we can hide from our nearest and dearest. There is nothing hidden from you Lord. Oh may you deal with us in mercy. Not according to what we deserve.

We thank you that the Bible makes clear that your mercies are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. Lord how different we are. We will often be unfaithful to you.

But you have never and will never be unfaithful to us. So still our hearts in your presence this evening. May we have that sense that the Lord himself is among us.

And has been pleased to meet with us. Bless every similar gathering Lord right across this presbytery. Right across our denomination, our nation. And to the ends of the earth Lord.

[6 : 51] From where the sun rises to where it sets. As your people gather today. We gather with this assurance. This promise that you give us. That your word will not return to you void.

It will accomplish your purposes. And Lord your purposes might be different to ours. You might intend that your word is a word of comfort to some.

A word of rebuke to others. A word of correction. A word that would build us up. Or a word that would stop us in our tracks. So we pray Lord that you will work as you see fit this evening.

And that you will help us as we turn to your word. And as we read it together. To grow in our understanding of you. And of your ways.

And of your dealings. With us. So bless us young and old. We thank you for seeing youngsters in church again this evening. We pray your blessing on them. In their young years. That they would grow up Lord.

[7 : 51] To love Jesus. To follow Jesus. And to serve Jesus. So bless us Lord. To the not so young as well. Every single one of us. Are known to you.

Meet with us we pray. Cleansing us from all our sin. We ask this in Jesus. Amen. We're going to sing again. This time from Psalm 73.

Which will be the topic of our study this evening. Psalm 73. And we're going to sing the first nine verses of that psalm.

Psalm 73. Well the psalmist is struggling with the fact that he sees ungodly people seeming to get on well. While he himself, a believer, is finding the going really tough.

Psalm 73 at the beginning. Yet God is good to Israel. To each pure hearted one. But as for me. My steps near slipped. My feet were almost gone. For I envious was.

[8 : 57] And grudged. The foolish folk to see. When I perceive the wicked sort. Enjoy prosperity. We're going to sing from the beginning down to the verse of Mark 9. Of Psalm 73.

To God's praise. Yet God is good to Israel.

To each pure hearted one. That God's thought.

As for me in my steps, in my head, my feet were almost gone.

For I in my years was undriven, the foolish hope to see.

[10 : 02] When I heard him, the wind and storm, the joy of standing he.

For children continue and burn, their dead of the hands is free.

They are also in that child of the land, not a place of others believe.

That far, that cry, like to a king, and compasses about.

And as the government of my hands, God, God, God, God, and the moon.

[11 : 25] Let I stand out with that land, O land that I have to wait.

They are the joy of the world, the love of the earth.

They set them up against the land, in their blood, in their stars.

And there is no change, not a place of others believe.

We're now going to read from that psalm, Psalm 73, as you find it in your Bibles, in the book of Psalms. Psalm 73, Psalm 73, written by a man called Asaph.

[12 : 57] Let's hear the word of the Lord. Psalm 73 at the beginning. Truly, God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my steps were almost gone.

My feet were almost gone. My steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm.

They're not in trouble, as other men. Neither are they plagued, like other men. Therefore, pride compasseth them about as a chain. Violence covereth them as a garment.

Their eyes stand out with fatness. They have more than heart could wish. They're corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression. They speak loftily.

They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore, his people return hither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.

[14 : 05] And they say, How doth God know? And is their knowledge in the most high? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world.

They increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning.

If I say I will speak thus, behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.

Until I went into the sanctuary of God. Then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places. Thou castest them down into destruction.

How are they brought into desolation as in a moment? They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakens. So, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.

[15 : 09] Thus my heart was greedy, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless, I am continually with thee.

Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee?

And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart fail. But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

For lo, they that are far from thee shall perish. Thou hast destroyed all them that go
ahoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God.

I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works. Amen. This is the
word of the Lord. It is inerrant.

[16 : 09] It is inspired. And we pray that he will follow it with his blessing. We're just going to bow
our heads once more in a word of prayer. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that we have
your word, that we have the Bible to guide us, that we don't gather here to hear the
thoughts of some mere mortal.

But we come, Lord, to focus on your word. Lord, we have so many competing voices that
are vying for our attention.

So many trying to advise us in different ways. But, Lord, your word is the only one we can
rely on. It is true. It is dependable. Your word is truth.

But, Lord, even as we read it, we find people within it who appear to be confused. We find
the writer of this psalm is on a roller coaster of emotions and feelings.

He begins by telling us God is good. But then he goes on to question how can life be so
unfair before eventually he comes back to the certainty that God is indeed good.

[17 : 19] And, Lord, that can be a bit like the struggles that go on in our lives and in our heads and
in our hearts from time to time. We make judgments about you depending on what is
going on in our own lives at any given time.

Oh, forgive us, Lord, when we do this. And instead, help us to believe what the Bible tells
us about you. That you are a God of love. A God who does not change.

A God who is the same every single day. Yesterday, today, and forever. And, Lord, that
can't be said about anybody else that we know. It can't be said about anything in this
world.

For all about there is change and decay. But, Lord, we are grateful that there is certainty
with you. Thankful that we know where we stand with you.

Because you make that clear in the Bible. So we pray, Lord, this evening that we would
want to have a good standing with you. And we know that that is only possible through
putting our trust in Jesus Christ.

[18 : 23] Our Lord and our Saviour. The one who took our place. Received our penalty. So that we
could go free. So draw us anew to Jesus tonight, Lord. And bless us as you see our need.

Oh, Lord, we may be burdened this evening. We may be cast down this evening. We may
be nourishing a heart that is tender and even broken, Lord. There have been many
changes in this congregation over recent years.

There are many who grieve, Lord. And we commend them afresh to you this evening.
That you, Lord, would help them. That you would comfort them. That you would be the
strength in their weakness.

That you would be the presence, Lord, when there is emptiness all around them. That you
would reassure them, Lord, of your loving care for them. We pray to you, Lord, for folk
who are struggling with their health, Lord.

They are always among us. And we ask, Lord, that you would bring healing where that
accords with your will. We know that you are a God who heals. We know that you are the
great physician. And we're thankful, Lord, that we can commit to you.

[19 : 26] Those whom we know are struggling with different things. So we pray, Lord, that you
would help those who tonight are dealing with pain, maybe on a daily basis.

They're dealing with the darkness of depression or whatever it may be. Throw close to
them, Lord. We pray for this presbytery, for the surrounding congregations.

We know that the presbytery has been weakened by ministers being called away to other places, Lord. You know that need. We don't need to tell you, Lord. But you ask us to pray.

You ask us to pray to the Lord of the harvest. That he would send workers into his vineyard. And so we pray that this evening, Lord. We pray that your hand would be upon men calling them, unsettling them in their workplaces and in their locations and their communities.

Until they respond to you, Lord, in obedience. We pray that you would lay that call on people's hearts. And that you, Lord, we thank you that you will equip all those whom you call.

[20 : 32] We pray that you'd help those that are intermoderators, Lord, looking after two congregations. We pray, Lord, for those who supply these congregations, for the many itinerant preachers and lay preachers.

We thank you for them, Lord, particularly over a time of summer when the ministers are on holiday. And we pray too, Lord, as we think of our congregation. We think of our nation. It's a nation that has wandered far from you, Lord.

And we find it easy to find fault, Lord, with those who are in authority over us. But maybe we don't find it so easy to do what you instruct us to.

To pray for them. So we pray, Lord, afresh this evening for our Prime Minister. For our First Minister. For their cabinets. For those, Lord, who are MPs and MSPs who serve our nation in that way.

We pray for our King, Lord, who, as we see even this week, Lord, in his celebration of faith. We can see that he's mixed up in his mind.

[21 : 33] Lord, we pray that you would draw him to you. And all our leaders would be drawn to you. We pray for those who are Christians in our parliaments, Lord. We realise that that's not an easy place to be.

And that they need to choose their battles well. Give them wisdom, we pray. And when they do speak, give them, Lord, the words to speak. To be persuasive. And, Lord, we continue to pray that you would put a stop to all the unchristian laws that we see coming onto our statute book.

That we would see a turnaround in our nation. A turning to you. That we, Lord, as your people would be on our knees pleading for our nation and for its good. So bless us this evening, Lord.

Bless those who are laid up in hospitals or in care homes. We thank you, Lord, for those who care for them. We know that there are people to whom you have given particular gifts of care. To look after others, whether that's in their own homes or in the community or in establishments where these people are.

Lord, we pray that you would help them in the work that they do. And, Lord, we pray again for our world this evening. There is so much turmoil. So many ongoing conflicts. We pray for the situation in Gaza.

[22 : 47] We pray for the situation in Ukraine. Lord, we commend these situations to you. And that you, in your time, Lord, would bring a halt to the east. We pray for Myanmar and for the Democratic Republic of Congo and numerous other places, Lord, that we may well be unaware of.

Where there is suffering. Where there is struggling. Where there are people, Lord, who are persecuted. We pray for believers, Lord, who are persecuted for their faith. Who cannot meet as we do.

Who, if they meet at all, do so in fear of reprisals. In fear of beatings or maybe even death. Lord, help your persecuted people, we pray. And help us to be thankful for the freedom that we enjoy.

Amen. Before we turn back to study Psalm 73, we're going to sing from Psalm 37. Psalm 37.

Nor do thou envy bear to those that work iniquity. For even like unto the grass, soon be cut down shall they. And like the green and tender herb, they wither shall away.

For even like the grass, soon be cut down shall they. For even like the grass, soon be cut down shall they.

[illegible]

And light unto the light he shall, thy righteousness is paid.

For in the new world's reign, which shall stand in sin again.

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We can read again at verse 2. Psalm 73 at verse 2. Asaph, who writes what this psalm says.

[28 : 14] But as for me, my feet were almost gone. My steps had well nigh slipped. I don't know if you're familiar with the term spoiler alert.

It is used when someone is about to give the game away. About the ending of a book or the plot of a film or what happened in a football match that had taken place earlier in the day.

Well, there's a spoiler alert right at the start of this psalm here. Where the writer Asaph gives his conclusion in the opening line. Truly, God is good to his dear.

And it's something similar to what happens when the closing scene of a film is played right at the start. And then it's followed by a subtitle that says six months earlier or three years earlier or something.

Something like that that's going on in this psalm. It begins with one truth and then suddenly the scene changes. The psalm begins with the statement that God is good.

[29 : 23] But then immediately almost changes to a scene where it seems like God is not so good. Where it seems like God is unfair. A scene where bad people are getting on well.

While good people are struggling with life. And we don't know how long it took the writer to get from that place where he was struggling to that place where he could trust.

But it's clear that it was a difficult journey. It was a hard journey that he was on. Maybe tonight you are somewhere on that journey.

Maybe you feel that God is unfair. Maybe as a Christian you are struggling with one trial after another. While you see others around you who have no time for God.

And they seem to have life so easy. Everything seems to go so well for them. They have no problems. Or maybe tonight this is the reason that you are not a Christian.

[30 : 26] This is the reason that you are not trusting the Lord. That you struggle with the fact of why does God allow suffering? That age old question. The situation got so bad for this fellow Asaph.

That he says about his faith, I was out ready to chuck it. I was on the brink of giving up. I had had enough. That's what he is saying in verse 2. But as for me, my feet were almost gone. My steps had well nigh slipped.

And so tonight I want to study with you this very honest account of a believer's struggle with the hardships that he encountered in his life.

And hopefully we can learn some lessons that will help us if and when we find ourselves in a similar situation. So I have four headings this evening.

Four words. We are going to look first of all at the trouble that we find in this psalm. The trouble. The psalmist was in the trouble. Then the temptation. And then the turnaround.

[31 : 33] Because his outlook does change. And then the truth that he expresses at the end. So the trouble. The temptation. The turnaround. And the truth.

It will be helpful if you have your Bibles open. As we refer to verses as we go through the psalm. So the trouble then. First of all. What trouble was this fellow in? Well the trouble for Asaph is that it just wasn't fair that the bad guys always win.

That's how he was seeing it. The bad guys always win. And that troubles him so much that he's ready to pack in his faith. My feet are almost gone, he says. And verse 3.

That's verse 2. Verse 3 states the reason for this crisis of faith. And it begins with the word for. Which alerts us to the fact that he's going to tell us why he's in this mess. He's going to tell us why he's close to the edge of chucking it all.

Let's read verse 3. For I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. So he got into that stage where he was jealous of the unbelievers.

[32 : 42] He was envious of the ungodly. Because life seemed to be trouble free for them. So Asaph, he's really honest here.

He's telling it as it is. He's not mincing his words in any way. What he sees and what he experiences seems to be at odds with what he believes.

And because he can't argue with what he's seeing happening. It's his beliefs that he's tempted to ditch. So just let's look at some of what he's seeing and what he's feeling and what's getting to him.

Verse 4, for instance. Life seems to be plain sailing for unbelievers. For there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm. They're always strong. They never seem to be weak. They never seem to be struggling.

The unbeliever. That's what he's seeing. And then verse 5. They are not in trouble as other men. Neither are they plagued like other men.

[33 : 51] And that's not actually true. Because you and I know that good people and bad people all have their struggles. But this is how he feels.

This is what he's feeling. What he's seeing. And it can sometimes be the case for us. That when we are struggling, that it seems like everybody else has it easy. When you as a Christian are having a hard time, it seems like your neighbours and friends and colleagues who don't go to church, who have no time for God.

Like, they're happy-go-lucky. They have no issues. They have no problems. Or so it seems. And notice then verses 6, 7 and 8. Because this is very real.

And this is still very current. Thinking of oppressors. Verse 6. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain. Violence covereth them as a garment.

Their eyes stand out with fatness. Because they have more than heart could wish. They're corrupt. They speak wickedly. Concerning oppression, they speak loftily.

[34 : 53] He's saying evil people. Persecutors. Oppressors. They seem to get off scot-free. They continue their reign of terror. Nothing ever seems to happen to them.

Oppressors seem to prosper. And you can't help, if you're watching a world situation, to feel that it's true. Take an example just from last week.

One of President Putin's staff. He was sacked by the President. And a few days later he's found dead. Now, they say that it appeared to be suicide.

But you can make something appear to be suicide. Because we know that just two years ago, another of his opponents, the Wagner boss, who led a rebellion against President Putin, a brief rebellion, he died in an aircraft crash.

You see, there are oppressors. There are persecutors. There are dictators. And you can almost be certain that anyone who stands up to them will be taken out of the equation. While these oppressors just get stronger and more powerful.

[35 : 57] And nothing seems to happen to them. Evil men continue in their oppression. That's what he was seeing. And you probably see it as well.

And it can sometimes shake our faith. It certainly shook Asaph's faith as he wrote this psalm. Think of those involved in people trafficking.

Who prey on the weak and the vulnerable. Who take them away from their homes and take them to another nation where they're used and abused. And these people make money from it.

They get rich. They get more powerful. That's what's talked about in verse 12. Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world. They increase in riches.

They're making more and more money out of dealing inhumanely with people. That's bugging him. That's getting to him. Well, here he is doing his best.

[36 : 58] And life is tough. It's maybe not what happens on a global scale. It may be troubling you this evening. It might be something much closer to home. It might be something that's happening in your own family circle.

You try to live your best as a Christian. And you meet with one battle after another. While you have family and friends.

You've got no interest in Jesus. And they never seem to struggle. It all seems plain sailing for them. When that happens.

It can very easily unsettle you in your faith. And so that brings us to the second point. Which is the temptation. So that was the first thing. That was the trouble. That's to summarise what Asaph was struggling with.

But then that leads to the temptation. The temptation he felt was to chuck it. To give up on God. Because what's the point? If this is the payback. The good verses 13 and 14.

[38 : 02] If you have your Bible open. Verse 13. Verily. I have cleansed my heart in vain. And washed my hands in innocence.

For all day long I've been plagued and chastened every morning. I've cleansed my heart in vain. I've been wasting my time. Is what he says.

It's just not worth it. He says you try and live for God. You try and live uprightly. But I just get more grief. More trouble. More pain. This is really honest. And heart searching stuff.

Which sometimes be uncomfortable to hear. And to read. But it's there for us in the scripture. I wonder if you ever think like that.

I wonder if you ever feel like that. I wonder if you ever speak like this. I believe a predecessor of mine. Minister Antain.

[39 : 00] Once said. In response to some tragedy that had happened. In the community. He said you might be asking. What is God playing at? What is God playing at?

Maybe tonight. You. Are thinking. You can't speak like that. You can't say these things. Asaph. But Asaph is saying that.

And God in his great wisdom. Inspired. Asaph. To write it down. So it would be there. For you. And for me. To help us. When we find ourselves.

In this kind of situation. Where we're struggling with oppression. And difficulty. And trial. Where everybody else seems to get us. God free. You know.

In one sense. It's not surprising. That Asaph questions. What God is doing. Because. It really does seem. To be at odds. With what the Bible. Teaches.

[40 : 01] We sang from Psalm 1. Psalm 1. Is very. Very clear. The. The righteous. Prosper. The wicked. Perish. That's how it should be.

That's how the Bible says. It is. But what Asaph is seeing. Is not that at all. What Asaph is seeing. Is at odds. With that. And the questions of that. Brings up in his heart.

And in his mind. Tempt him. To turn his back. On God. And in verse 13. He seems to have come to the conclusion. That it's just. Not been worth.

The effort. Following the Lord. I have cleansed my heart. In vain. Oswald. Oswald Chambers.

In his book. My Utmost. For His Highest. He says this. He says. We are incurably. Suspicious. Of God. We are incurably.

[40 : 57] Suspicious. Of God. Our very nature. Causes us often. To question. His motives. Why does he allow me. To go through this. Why is my life.

So difficult. So challenging. So hard. So you see. There's this great tension. Of faith. For. For. For Asaph. There's a tension between.

His. His. His. How he begins. Verse 1. This statement. Of fact. Truly. Truly. And this next statement. In verse. 13. Verily. It's the same word.

It could be truly. As well. Truly. I've. Cleansed my heart. In vain. So. So he begins with. Truly. God is good. But then he says. But truly. I've been wasting.

My time. Or at least. That's. How he sees it. He knows what the Bible teaches. But what he sees.

[41 : 55] What he experiences. What he feels. Seems to be at odds. With that. And so as he struggles. With this. He clearly becomes a target.

For the enemy. Of our souls. A target. For Satan. He's already. He's already. Feeling that God's a bit unfair. Satan loves nothing more. Than to stir.

That fire. Into a blaze. That will spread. He's. That's what he does. He's been perfecting that skill. Right from the start. That's a tactic. That he used.

With Eve. In Genesis. Chapter 3. He said. The only reason God doesn't want you. To eat that fruit. Is that you'll become like him. You're no good and evil. God doesn't want that for you.

God doesn't want you. To be so great. God wants to keep you down. And he uses that same tactic. He used it with Asaph. God doesn't want what's best for you.

[42 : 54] He may well be using it with you this evening. To get you to doubt God's goodness. To get you to question God's motives. To get you to doubt God's authority.

To wonder is he really in control of everything. If he allows this. If he permits that. Then Asaph says one more thing.

Which I want to note before we move on to our third point. And that's in verse 15. Verse 15. If I say I will speak thus. Behold I should offend against the generation of thy children.

What does that mean? It means that despite the way he feels. There's something preventing him from an angry public outburst.

There's something that's stopping him from publicly saying. Following God's a waste of time. That's how he feels inside. That's what he's been pouring out his heart.

[43 : 56] But he doesn't say it publicly. For fear of bringing shame on God's people. That's what verse 15 is saying.

If I say I will speak thus. If I'm going to speak my mind. Behold I should offend the generation of thy children. And you know even that little restraining grace.

Shows that he is still under God's authority. And God's control. And God's care. Because God prevents him from going public.

On how he feels. And prevents him from bringing shame on God's cause. But we need to move on. We need to move on. And see how he got out of this state of disillusionment.

So that was secondly. That was the temptation. We've talked about the trouble that he was facing. We've talked about he envied the wicked. They seem to have an easy life while he had it tough. We've talked about the temptation. He's tempted to ditch his faith.

[44 : 55] Because he's suffering on a daily basis. But then thirdly. The turnaround. The turnaround. Something changed. Almost like that. Something changed.

Because one minute he's telling us. He can't get his head around all of this. And then almost straight away after that. He says. It all fell into place. And you'll see that turnaround.

Between verse 16 and verse 17. 17. So in verse 16 he's saying. I don't get this. When I thought to know this. It was too painful for me.

I just struggled with it. I couldn't get my head around it. But then verse 17. Until I went into the sanctuary of God. Then understood I. The end.

The end. The people who reject God.

[46 : 06] Who seem to get on so well in this life. They will one day meet with God. They will one day meet with God. And then the tables will be turned. Verse 18.

19. 20. Verse 18. Surely. Thou did set them in slippery places. Thou castest them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation.

As in a moment. They are utterly consumed with terror. As a dream when one awaketh. So. O Lord. When thou awakest. Thou shalt despise. Their.

Image. It's a day coming. When God will right. Every wrong. But it is in the future. And we need to have that future. Dimension.

In our heads. In our thoughts. This is not happening today. This is probably not happening tomorrow. But it will happen. It will happen. We live in an age where.

[47 : 03] Where we get everything instantly. Anything you want. Next day delivery. We. I don't know about you. But every. At some point every year. I decide it's time to lose weight.

And so I'll set a date to start. And I'll. I'll eat some salad. And I'll go for a run. And I'll drink some water. And then the next day. I'll go on the scales to see if. And it's changed.

And of course. It hasn't. Because that takes time. We've got to wait. We've got to wait. And that's the dimension that Asaph was missing.

What would happen if he waited. And trusted the Lord. See God wants us to take a long view. To remember that this world is. This world is temporary.

But the next. Is eternal. What happens here. Matters. Yes. But it's what awaits us at the end. That is crucial.

[47 : 59] Of crucial importance. There's a day coming. When God's people. Will be. Rewarded. While God's enemies. Will get what they. Deserve.

Asaph understood that. And it changed everything. His outlook. Changed completely. It's. It's no longer his feet. That are about to slip. It's the wicked people.

Who are on slippery ground. Verse 18. Surely they did set them in slippery. Places. Friends. What awaits the believer. Is tremendous. But what awaits the unbeliever.

Is terrifying. But I want us to understand. There's no point in just talking about the turnaround. His outlook changed. Without. Grasping. How it changed. What exactly.

Changed it. How did. How did. How did his. His thinking be. Get reorientated. Well it's this. Verse 17. I went.

[48 : 57] Into. The sanctuary. Of God. He went. To spend. Time. With God. Now that may well have been. Time alone. With his Bible.

Or it may well have been. Time in a gathering. Such as this. Probably. That's what he's talking about. I went into. The sanctuary. Of God. He went to here. To the place where God's people.

Meet. To heal God's word. And God's word. Changed. His outlook. Changed his thinking. Changed. His understanding.

And that is really important for us to remember. Because. If you have similar struggles. To what. Asaph. Had. That's never going to change.

You're never going to get out of that. By just churning it over. In your head. That's what he was doing. In verse 16. Remember. When I thought to know this. It was too painful. For me. It was just so. It made it worse.

[49 : 55] What he needed to do. Was go and hear from God. Go to the place where God is worshipped. Go to the place where God. Speaks.

Because it's God. That will reorientate. Our thinking. And help us realize. And remember that he does. Actually. Care. For every single one.

Of his people. And he will. Right. Those wrongs. When you don't spend time with God's people. When you don't spend time with God. Then you're a sitting target.

For the enemy. For Satan. You're vulnerable. That's what he always attacks. When we're. When we're vulnerable. We're going to be in God's word. Daily. It's the sword.

That will. Defend you. From. The enemy's attacks. And the sword. That will ward him off. But notice. There's one third certainty. In this psalm. Before we move on.

[50 : 51] To. Final point. So there's a certainty. In verse one. Truly. God is good. There's an apparent certainty. In verse. Thirteen. Verily. I've cleansed my heart.

In vain. But then there's this turnaround. In verse eighteen. Surely. Thou did set them. In slippery places. Surely. Justice.

Will be served. That will be saved. Trust the Lord. He will fix those wrongs. He will ensure that justice. Is done. So there's been this reorientation.

In his thinking. In his understanding of God. That's the turnaround. I'll come to our final point. We talked about the trouble. The temptation. The turnaround. Finally. The truth. We're coming now.

To the later. Verses in the psalm. Where he expresses. Some wonderful truths. About God. Look at verse twenty three. Verse twenty three.

[51 : 47] Nevertheless. I am continually. With thee. Thou hast holden me. By my. Right hand. You know. If Asaph's faith. Depended on his hold. Of God. He'd be washed away.

By that. Because his hold. Was flimsy. At best. It was. He was just about. To let go. But it was God. That had a home. And God's grip. Can never be loosened.

Remember Jesus said. No one can pluck them. Out of my foolish hand. No one can pluck them. Out of my. Hand. Asaph. He was at that point.

Of letting go. His hold. He was at the point. Of ditching his faith. He had. He was convinced. That God had abandoned. That God didn't care.

That God. Wasn't there. Anymore. You ever been in that place? You ever been in that place? This evening? You're questioning. God seems absent.

[52 : 45] The story's told of. Of a builder. He. Working a night shift. On a construction site. He was working several stories up. And he dripped over something. And he fell over a wall.

And he managed to. Catch hold of something. And was able to. Hold himself there. And he shouted. And he shouted. But no one could hear it. Because of. Construction noise. Cement mixers. And diggers. And all that stuff.

And no one was able to see it. Because. The lighting was poor. Where he was. And so he clung. And he clung. And he clung. And as long as he could. But eventually.

His grip weakened. And he fell. Three inches. Onto the scaffolding. That was underneath him. But he didn't know he was there. That's all he lives with God.

He's always there. He's always there. Even when you don't know it. Even when you don't feel it. The everlasting arms. Are underneath. His people.

- [53 : 45] Upholding you. And ready to catch you. If you fall. Maybe tonight. You've been trying to cling on. To something. When what you really need to do.
- Is let go. And trust the Lord. Let go. And commit yourself. To him. Because you'll never hold on by yourself. Allow him to sustain you.
- Because he's all you need. He is all you need. You too. Sang a song. Entitled. All I want is you. Well that's what Asaph goes on to say about God.
- In the verses that come after this. Verse 25. Whom have I in heaven. But thee. And there's none. Upon earth. That I desire. Besides thee.
- All I want. Is you. God. That's a major shift. From where he was. A few verses earlier. In this psalm. Where all he wanted. Was the life of the ungodly.
- [54 : 44] Which seemed to be so easy. Now he says no. I want nothing. More than God. There is none. On earth. That I desire.
- Besides thee. And now he knows. That because he has the Lord. He knows that it will end. Well. For him. And that is the true hope. Of the Krishna.
- Whatever you're going through. Whatever troubles. Whatever trials. That are in your life. It will end. Well. For you. Verse 24. You know it's verse.
- It's after that. I can't find the actual. Verse at the moment. Verse 24. He knows he's en route. To heaven. Thou shalt guide me. With thy counsel. And afterward.
- Receive me to glory. Afterward. After all this stuff. After all these trials. After all the hardship. You will receive me. Into heaven.
- [55 : 42] He knows. He's en route. To glory. Right now. Right now. It might seem like. The wicked prosper. And the godly struggle. That is all going to change.
- And it's going to change. Dramatically. Because they will be destroyed. And he will be. Rewarded. As we finish. Just notice one final thing.
- That Asaph says. In verse 28. But it is good for me. To draw near. To God. Isn't that what you need tonight?
- Isn't that what I need. As well. Because the bible says. Draw near. To God. And he. Will draw near. To you. All I need.
- Is God. All I need. Is you Lord. Amen. Let's pray. Lord.
- [56 : 39] We thank you. That the bible. Is such an honest book. That it details. The struggles. That your people have. That never airbrushes them. Never censors them. It speaks the truth.
- When it's uncomfortable. To hear. As well as when it's. Encouraging to hear. So we thank you tonight. For. Asaph's story. Yes. He struggled. But he came.
- To see Lord. That there was. An eternal dimension. To all of this. That he had a God. Who was there. After all. Even though he couldn't see him.
- In the darkness. Of his surroundings. And in the despair. Of his suffering. So Lord. Help us as well. To know. That you are always there. Help us Lord.
- To commit ourselves. To you. This evening. And trust you. With all our hearts. We ask this in Jesus. Amen. We're going to finish singing.
- [57 : 38] From that psalm. Some verses near the end. Psalm 73 again. We sang from the beginning. Earlier. We'll sing from verse 25. This time. To the end.
- Of the psalm. Psalm 73. At verse 25. Verse 25. Whom have I. In the heavens high. But thee.
- O Lord alone. And in the earth. Whom I desire. Beside thee. There is none. My flesh and heart. Doth faint and fail. But God. Doth fail me never. For of my heart.

God is his strength. And portion. Forever. These verses of Psalm 73. From verse 25. To the end of the psalm. To God's praise. Psalm 73.

Psalm 73.

[59 : 17] A portion. God bless you.

God bless you.

God bless you. Let's now conclude with a benediction.

now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore Amen