

Tuesday, December 6, 2022 • Read Psalm 73:1–24

Questions from the Scripture text: Who penned this Psalm (superscript)? With what word does he begin it (v1a)? What is true? How does v1b define "Israel" from v1a? But what had been the case with Asaph (v2)? In what did this stumbling/slipping consist (v3a)? What (mistaken) assessment had led to this envy (v3b)? What did he think of their death (v4)? What did he think of their life (v5)? What did he think they had gotten away with (v6)? With what apparent results (v7)? How had they been able to speak (v8–9)? Despite what conduct (v8a)? And against Whom (v9a)? And whom else (v9b)? Who else seem to prosper (v10a)? With what inheritance (v10b)? And what spiritual result (v11)? How does Asaph summarize the first 11 verses (v12)? How had he begun his conclusion about himself in v13? What did he conclude that his conduct had been (v13a, 13b)? With what perceived success (v13a)? Concluded from what circumstances (v14)? What was he tempted to do (v15a)? But what would this have done (v15b)? What had he previously attempted (v16a)? With what result (v16b)? What resolved this pain (v17a)? What did perceiving God in His holiness cause Asaph to understand (v17b)? What is the reality of the wicked's apparent prosperity (v18a)? What is the reality of the wicked's state at death (v18b)? When will this realization come upon them (v19a)? What is the type and intensity of the effect (v19b)? What will the Lord's actions make their indulgent and boastful life to have been like in retrospect (v20)? After having worshiped, what is Asaph's assessment of his pre-worship condition (v21)? Of his pre-worship response (v22)? Of his current condition (v23–24a)? Of his future condition (v24b)?

What is happening when the wicked seem to prosper? Psalm 73:1–24 looks forward to the opening portion of morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these twenty-four verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **when the wicked seem to prosper, the Lord is actually preparing them for the sudden and more horrible disaster that they deserve, while trying the righteous so that they may repent of being like beasts toward Him.**

This Psalm is organized around three uses of the word "surely" (v1, where it's translated "truly," v13, and v18). These belong to three sections in which the Spirit teaches us that the flesh misinterprets what is happening with the wicked (v1–12), the flesh misinterprets what is happening with the righteous (v13–16), but faith comes to the correct conclusions about both (v18–24) and a right response to God (v25–28).

The flesh misinterprets what is happening with the wicked, v1–12. The theme that the Asaph had needed kept before his heart and mind is plainly stated in v1: God is good to Israel. He Who gives purity in heart makes sure that for those to whom He gives it, all other things work together for good (cf. Rom 8:28–32).

But Asaph was stumbling and slipping (v2) into envy (v3a). Why? Because he was living according to sight (v3b, "when I saw") instead of according to faith (which lives by what is sure: Who God is, what God has said, what God does).

v3 is stark: the boastful and the wicked are spiritually and morally disgusting; why would he envy them? Because he thought they prospered. He thought that the wicked were comfortable and strong (v4), always untroubled (v5, 13b), contented (v7), fulfilled (v10), and always increasing in riches (v12c)—despite being proud (v6a), violent (v6b), and arrogant toward God (v8–9, 11)!

Even when the wicked are outwardly prospering, none of these things are even internally true of them. And what is coming upon them will remove even the illusion of outward prosperity. But the flesh falls for illusions and stumbles.

The flesh misinterprets what is happening with the righteous, v13–16. Perhaps an even more dangerous delusion is the idea that the righteous are cleansing their own hearts (v13a) and washing their own hands (v13b). This is the language of flesh, not faith. It is boastful and proud before God, just like the wicked are!

And of course those who are proud before God will miss that they already have Him. The self-righteous, who think that they themselves are producing spiritual good, interpret God's fatherly discipline (v14, cf. Heb 12:5–7) as unkindness.

But the truth is that God's people are His children (v15b). Asaph realizes that his perspective was a lie (v15a). Thankfully, God had spared him from hurting others, but this hadn't kept living by sight from hurting himself (v16).

Beholding God's holiness makes all the difference, v17. What made the difference? How is Asaph now praying and singing this from the overall perspective of the Psalm? "Until I went into the sanctuary [the holiness] of God" (v17a). This is what made him "understand" (v17b).

The holiness of God's value puts so-called "prosperity" into perspective. What can a man possibly have that would compensate them for not having God? If it's worthless to gain the whole world and lose one's own soul, then how much more worthless is it to gain the whole world and lose the holy God!

The holiness of God's character makes the punishment of the wicked certain. This holy God is not letting anyone get away with anything. The nature of His providence to them in the present is determined by the certainty of the His punishment of them in the end.

Faith comes to correct conclusions about what is happening with the wicked, v18–20. With "their end" (v17b) now correctly brought into view by the holiness of God, Asaph doesn't see the wicked as being raised on high but set up to fall to destruction (v18). The illusion of prosperity makes their punishment that much more shocking (v19a) and horrible (v19b). The prosperity will have seemed as real and as short as a dream (v20a–b). "Image" in v20c is from a root meaning "shadow." The point is that not only is God heightening punishment by their prosperity, but also heightening their humiliation by shattering their proud appearance as being a mere apparition.

Faith comes to correct conclusions about what is happening with the righteous, v21–24. So, was Asaph really cleansing his own heart and washing his own hands (v13)? With God's holiness now in view (v17), he realizes that his grief and vexation had been exposing exactly the opposite: he was a foolish, ignorant, beast (v22). He was acting like someone who did not know God at all!

But, praise be to God, the real story of a believer's life is not what is coming from the believer, but what is coming from God. He was not living as one who knew God, but still God was continually with him (v23a). When a believer comes into the holiness of God, and realizes that he is being given to know the God Who knows him, our entire perspective on life changes. God is always right there with me to hold me up. "You hold me by my right hand" (v23b). God is always right there with me to teach and direct me. "You will guide me with Your counsel" (v24a).

And the believer's past and present are foretastes of the future. "And afterward [You will] receive me to glory" (v24b). The great reward of heaven is already with me, and already helping me, and He Himself will personally receive me to Himself at the last! How great will that glory be, and how great that grace is already!

What wicked seem to prosper? What would your flesh say about them? What would faith say instead, in view of God's holiness? What is your flesh tempted to say about you? What would faith say instead? What difficult circumstances are you in? How do faith and flesh disagree about them?

Sample prayer: Lord, surely You are good to Your people, Your Israel of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Don't let us be like beasts who do not know You, but take us by the hand, and guide us by Your counsel. Make us to enter into Your holiness and know that we are continually with You! Make us to speak as those who walk by faith, not by sight. Make us to encourage a generation of Your children rather than be untrue to them. Give us a glimpse of that glory to which You will receive us in the end: the glory of personally knowing You Yourself, and being received by You Yourself, in Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we ask it, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP73A "Yes, God Is Good to Israel" or TPH73A "Surely, God Is Good to Israel"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Psalm 73. These are the words of god. The song of asap. Truly God is good to israel. To such as our pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled. My steps had nearly slipped. For, i was envious of the boastful when i saw the prosperity of the wicked For their own pangs in their death.

But their strength is firm, they are not troubled as other men. Nor they plagued like other men. Therefore pride serves as their necklace. Violence covers them like a garment, their eyes bulge with abundance. They have more than heart could wish. This scarf and speak. Wickedly concerning oppression. They speak loftily.

They set their mouths against the heavens. And their tongue walks through the earth. Therefore, his people return here and waters of a full cup or drained by them. And they say, How does god know? And is there knowledge in the most high? Behold, these are the ungodly who are always an ease.

They increase in riches. Surely i have cleansed my heart in vain. And washed my hands in innocence. For all day long. I have been plagued and chasing every morning. If i had said, i will speak thus Behold, i would have been untrue to the generation of your children. When i thought, how to understand this, it was too painful for me.

Until i went into the sanctuary of god. Then i understood their end. Surely you set them in slip replaces. You cast them down to destruction. Oh, how they are? Brought to desolation, is in a moment. They utterly consumed with terrace. There's a dream, when one awakes. So lord, when you awake, You shall despise their image.

Thus my heart was grieved and i was vexed in my mind. I was like a beast before you Nevertheless, i'm continually with you. You hold me. Why am i right hand? You will guide me with your council. And afterward, receive me. To glory. So, for the reading of god's inspired, and Then twerk.

So, there are Three uses of the word, surely. That. Help us. Uh, see how this psalm is organized. One of them is translated. Uh, truly. In. In our english version. Which makes it a little more difficult to see. But it's right at the beginning. In verse 1, it's the same Hebrew word as at the beginning of verse 13.

And at the beginning of verse 18, And so the psalm is broken up into this. Three sections. The first is, Uh, truly god is good to israel. Um, Even though his flesh is misinterpreting. What was going on with the wicked? Which is the theme of versus one through 12 has His misinterpretation of what is happening with the wicked.

And then, Um, because he's misinterpreting. Uh, what is happening with the wicked? He's misinterpreting what happened. What is happening with himself? So even those surely god is good to israel to such. As our pure in heart. Um, Because god is the one who gives Uh, both the pureness of heart and then the goodness, and we'll think about that in a moment.

Uh, but he's misinterpreted. What's going on with the wicked? And so he says of himself. Surely i have cleansed my heart in vain. So, he thinks he's the one, he's Describing himself. As the one who cleanses his own heart and is the implication is that God isn't being good to him.

So, you have the opposite sort of surely there. In verse 13, starting section two versus 13 through 17. Um, but when he comes it lasts to hold god in that hinge verse verse 17 Until i went into the sanctuary of god, then i understood their end. He comes to the correct shortly about the wicked.

Which corrects his view of himself. Surely you set them. And strip slip replaces and so, Those three surely's. A kind of. Uh, bring the outline or the flow of the psalm. To the forefront in the way that the spirit caused it to be written. So it's flesh. Is misinterpreting.

What is going on? Uh, with Uh, with the wicked he has Uh, failed to lay hold of what the apostle and we lay, hold of in Romans 8, 28 through 32 Uh, we know that all things work together for those who love God, and are called according to those despurpose.

How to? In what way do we know or what do we know to be the reason that they have come to love god? Well, because god has called them Those whom Um, God. For new. Those whom God loved. He predestined those whom he predestined he called, Those whom he called he justified those whom he justified.

He glorified and in the Process of glorifying those whom he justified. He makes them to love him. That's part of his glorifying us as his increasing our love for him. Making us to know that we are never separated from his love for us. And that everything that he brings us through increases our love for him, so all things work together for good.

For those who love god and are called according to his purpose. It's the same thing as truly God, is good to israel to such as his as our pure and heart. Where did that purity of heart come from, is it earning the goodness of god to israel? No. It is an example.

Number one of god's goodness to them to give them purity of heart. Let me so see the, the first part. Of god's saving goodness. Is. Uh, this Justification that begins our sanctification. The wicked, don't have that. They don't have the first part. Of god, saving goodness. They have not begun to love him.

And therefore, We, uh, we can say Uh, all things work together for the condemnation of those who never come to love god. Because they have not been called. According to his purpose. That's the right way to see the wicked. That's why as we were A hearing about all of the different powers that were opposed to the apostles.

The next 16, this week, on the lord's day, we were recognizing one after another of them seem to be in power, but are really in bondage. And are to be pittied because of the destruction to which they are going apart from christ. Even those who are process and persecute us.

This is the great way in which christians have been able to love our enemies and love our persecutors throughout the centuries is by getting the dynamics, right? That asap is getting wrong. In psalm 73.

And so, because he's gotten Um, the dinette that he's getting that. Uh, dynamic wrong. He is stumbling and slipping. As for me, my feet had almost stumbled My steps had nearly slipped. Now, by the time we get to the end of the passage and we know that it's Um, it's the lord who's always with us, the lord, who takes us by the hand, the lord who teaches us by his council, that he's fitting us for glory.

And then, Um, when he has done fitting us for glory, he'll receive us too. Glory By the time we're done with this home, we see it that way. We say well, Where are the almost in the nearly coming from inverse 2? Aren't they coming from grace as well? And so, here's The picture of asap as a believer, who is envious of the wicked.

And even in the way the spirit gives us the, the verse of verse two, he's showing us how merciful God is and run in restraining the effects of our remaining sin. So that he doesn't stumble all the way he doesn't slip all the way. God graciously keeps him from reaching the conclusion.

We'll see you later that he even keeps him from opening his mouth to betray the generation of his children although that doesn't always happen. With believers, sometimes they have been permitted to open their mouths out of remaining sand and And cause. Many others to stumble. But it stumbled and slipped into envy because he was living, not according To what the word has said.

And we've thought a lot about how the word what the word says, in order to correct our views of things and what is actually good and Um, That there is no good apart from god and and so forth. But Uh, look at what he says. For, i was envious of the boastful when i Saw.

The prosperity of the wicked, his eyes were determining what prosperity is? Instead of god's word. Determining. What prosperity is? So he is living by sight. Instead of living by faith. Deadly leads us into. Into misinterpretation. Um, And the people of whom he was envious. Look at how they're described here.

He doesn't say i was envious of the prosperous. You can see in the word about his living by sight. The benefit. He would have had if he was living by the word. Because he doesn't have his envious of the prosperous. This is i was envious of the boastful. He says, when i saw the prosperity of the wicked, The boastful in the wicked are are too, um, their truths but they are disgusting truths.

They're Offensive truths. That person's boastful. That person's wicked. And yet, these are the ones whom he was envying. Because he was living by sight, instead of by faith. And so he thought, Uh, that they were prospered judging by his eyes instead of by god's word, and therefore by his flesh.

Instead of uh, instead of the truth. He concluded that the wicked are comfortable and strong and verse 4. That they're always in troubled in verse 5.

That they are. Contented their eyes bulging with abundance and Having more than their heart could wish for seven. That they are. Fulfilled. Their desires are fulfilled. There people return waters of a full cup are drained by them. That they're always increasing enriches. There in verse 12 and always at ease in verse 12, You can add that to the comfortable and strong from verse 4.

These things aren't true, of course. The wicked are never satisfied. They live in constant misery. The hit themselves and they hate others. They told themselves lies, they spend a great deal of effort. Pushing down on the reality. Behind their hearts. They play all kinds of mental games of themselves.

Which is ironic because they also tell themselves and others. That faith in the one true god, as a mental game, and here they are playing. Mental games to assure themselves, that they are fine without him. But we know all that if we are. Being instructed by the word that enables us to sit down and think plainly.

And honestly, About what is like to be these supposedly prosperous wicked. So, if you judge by sight, Which is controlled by the flash. You'll conclude their prosperous. If you judge it by the word, You'll know that they're miserable but that they're misery is much greater than Their current experiential misery.

Their misery is that they are in. Um, open. Hostility to god. And that is going to end. With their experience of god, no one gets to not experience. God. The, the distinction is between experiencing him and his wrath and fury or experiencing him as the fulfillment. Of all of your desire and delight.

Everyone will experience him forever. And so he thinks all these things about them, even though, Uh, even though he's observing that they're proud first part of verse 6, their violent second part of verse 6. Their arrogant, especially. Against god. Against everyone else, too. But against god. Arrogant against others, a scoff and speak quickly concerning impression.

They speak loftily Their tongue walks through the earth, but they're also arrogant against god. They set their mouth against the heavens verse 9. They say, how does god know is their knowledge in the most high? Verse 11.

And so if He understands. Properly, the way that they are in their hearts towards others and towards god, Then he will know. That they are not the prosperous.

But he has come to wrong conclusions about them. And therefore He comes to wrong conclusions about himself. We already started seeing that. Surely i have cleansed my heart in vain. And washed my hands in innocence. If he doesn't see god's mercy to him. In his own. Uh, faith and repentance.

Then he is going to end up being too much. Like the wicked. This idea that the righteous cleanse their own hearts. Is. Dangerous solution. Because it's boastful and proud before god just like the wicked are. You see, you see that in verse? Uh, 13. How i have cleansed my heart and rain and washed my hands in innocence.

And then, in verse 14, the implication that Um that god has mistreated him or failed to live up to his end. For all day long. I have been plagued and chased into every morning. Someone very dear to me in my life. Had wrong ideas about what prosperity. Is. And who it is that gives faith and who it is.

That gives sanctification. Than his conclusion about himself, was that. He was cleansing his own heart and he was washing his own hands. And all he was getting for it was god failing to uphold his end of the bargain.

But it was his Eyesight definition of what prosperity is not. Goodness, the best things to know god. To have him. You know, the conclusion at the very end. What is good for me? Is to draw near to god goodness. For me is drawing near to god. We'll get to that next week.

Meet a little bit of translation, help there.

The self-righteous, you think? That they themselves are producing spiritual good. Interpret god's fatherly. Discipline is unkindness. Remember he was 12 verses 5 through 7 which talks about the troubles believers have But that comes. After 11 chapters of talking about. Living by faith, instead of living by sight. Because faith perceives that Jesus.

Is infinitely more glorious than anything else in the book of readers. That's Um, and he's whom we have In the public worship of god, praise god. And then it turns around and says, If you live by this faith, instead of by sight, you'll properly understand. Your trials, god's treating you as children.

Because he loves you. That's what good fathers do. He's fitting you for glory. It's the same thing here. Asap who says i'm continually with you. Um, Uh, you hold me. Bye-bye, right hand. You guide me with your council. Well, what does god continually with him? And holding him by his right hand and guiding him by his council.

What has that been like in his life? Has it been like, Um, You know, walking on Uh, walking on air and everything's rainbows and sunshine. And He's singing, sweet fanny. Crosby songs to himself all day long. No, it's been all day long. I have been plagued and chased into every morning.

And yet the correct interpretation of his life. Takes the discipline of god and says, wait a minute. That's because i'm continually with god and he's holding me by the right hand. He's guiding me with his council. It's the hebrews 12. Wait a minute. God is actually my father and he's treating me as one who is actually his son.

And he loves me and he's giving me whatever. Discipline is necessary for me at last to see him. The peaceful fruit of righteousness and the holiness without which i wouldn't see the lord. So he's guiding me with his council. So that afterward, he will receive me into glory and i'll have him in heaven.

And i already have him on earth.

But in order to Understand our lives correctly. We have to judge by what the bible says. Instead of Our perception of our experience, which is going to mystify Prosperity for us and lead us into thinking that the wicked habit, good, and the righteous habit bad.

In that condition, he was acting like a beast. Towards god. The truth is that god's people are his children. You see that language already? Uh, changed their inverse verse 15. If i had said i will speak thus the hold, i would have been untrue. To the generation of your children.

Do you hear the idea there that is in hebrews chapter 12. That god's people are not. Merely his people, they're his children. He's disciplining them because he loves them and he's bringing them to himself forever. This is why is all the suffering in my life. Well, if you're a believer, Because you've been adopted.

And your heavenly father is preparing you. To be holy with the holiness that you need in order to enjoy him properly and fully forever. Because he's bringing you home. To himself. And so here's an entire generation of children who are going to receive the same discipline. Why? Because they're actually his children.

And he's going to treat them. According to the wisdom and goodness of a heavenly father, An asap realizes. What would have happened? If with all of these walking by sight, instead of walking by faith thoughts and feelings, i had opened my mouth and spoken that way. I would have caused god's children to stumble.

It would have been better for me to have a millstone tied around my neck. But praise god. Here, prevented him. From speaking. In his folly.

He was in danger of hurting others, he'd already A gun hurting himself. When i thought, how to understand this, it was too painful for me. And so, the lord Brought him to worship which is what made all the difference. Hey, until i went to the sanctuary of god to The place of god's holiness, quite literally it's built off of that word.

Then. I understood their end. And faithful holds the holiness of god. It is enabled to come to correct conclusions about the wicked and about itself about the righteous. Why? Because the holiness of god's value puts the prosperity of the wicked into perspective. He comes and he sees that god is in completely other that god alone his creator, everything else is creature.

That got alone has inherent value. Everything else can only have derivative value. That got alone, has all goodness in himself. That got alone has all life in himself. How can he think that the wicked were prospering? When they lacked this, god whom asaph's met and knew in the sanctuary.

I hope you have the same experience too if you have a grumbling or jealous heart, Towards others. And then you come down and the lord's denmorning to To the chapel. And we enter in we we start to be reminded by god, the holy spirit from the holy scripture. In the holy assembly, on the holy day.

You hear all those holies and what are they all announcing to us? That from god and through god and two, god are all things that he is the one who who is the ever blessed god, and he is all All our hope for blessedness and he has given himself to us.

And taken us to himself. And suddenly you have no reason to be jealous of anyone. Because you have that already, which cannot be surpassed. You have god's own treasure from all eternity, which is himself. And he has made himself yours. And so, the holiness of god's value puts The prosperity of the wicked into perspective and the holiness of god's character.

Makes the punishment to the wicked a certainty. Because you realize, How dreadful it is for those? Who think they have prosperity without god? But everything they think they have. Will be gone. And they will have god but not as a prosperity. But as punishment. And his fury forever. And so he says, when i went to the sanctuary, when i went to the place of God's, holy holiness, i saw her in They're in slip replaces.

You set them sleepy places. You cast them down to destruction. Oh, hi there. Brought to desolation as in a moment there. I really consumed is with terrorists. As a dream with one awake, when one awake. So lord, when you awake, you shall despise their image. And so he doesn't see the wicked as being raised on high but set up to fall.

You know, they're not living in a mountain palace. They're on a slippery, precipice at the top of the mountain. And their perception of being high and lifted up. A little contribute to the horror. Of when they finally do slip and god casts them down. Into destruction. It will increase the suddenness, the shock of it.

Brought to desolation is in a moment. It will increase the intensity, the horror of it. Utterly consumed with terrorists. The prosperity will seem have seemed as real and short as a dream. As a dream when one awakes? So lord, when you awake, you shall despise their image. And the word translated image there is not

the The one that we Uh, used for the one who's made in the image of god, it means something like a, a Shadow or an apparition.

A hologram. Well, not a like. Dense hologram that can do things. But but you get the idea. That it was all an illusion, all a delusion. The reality of themselves was a horror. And god doesn't believe in their lie. He despises in. That image that they had of themselves.

And that way, if we think about them in a fleshly weigh ahead of them, So faith comes to correct. Conclusions about what is happening with the wicked. And faith comes to correct conclusions. Of what was happening with righteous. This is thus my heart was grieved and i was vexed in my mind.

Now, he's not saying. I cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocence. He's saying i was a foolish and ignorant. A person who's acting like a beast. Towards you. Now he knows what's coming from him. Any faith, he had any repentance, he had any restraint of his sin.

That came from god. Praise god for his mercy. But what came from him? Foolishness ignorance. Beastliness That's what comes from us. Any anything besides that, that we find in us, any good that is in us, is from god. Praise god.

The real story of a believer's life is not what comes from us about what comes from him. I'm continually with you. You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with your council and afterward receive me to glory. So he comes to correct conclusions. About his past and his present and therefore about his future.

We already have the great reward of heaven. And what he's doing in our lives is helping us get there. The glory will be great, but the grace. That we experience is great already.

And then, let's pray. My father would pray that you would help us. So, there are many wicked who seem to prosper. There are many Uh, even who Uh, seem to have much more. Um, enjoyment in life. Uh, due to worldliness. Even among those who, Profess to be christians and we're tempted.

Lord. To be envious. Oh, forgive us. Who pray that in these family worship times, and then, Especially in the lord's day assemblies, you would bring us Into your holiness, to See, and know that. You are a father. To have genuinely adopted us as your children. And are producing holiness in us.

So that we who already have, you can have you at last to the full And so we pray that you would keep yourself always before us since this is what makes the difference. So you'd keep your infinite value before us, that you would keep your perfect justice. And moral righteousness.

Before us. And that you would make our hearts to know you to be with us, to know you to be good to us. To know you to be doing, good to us and in us To know any. Uh, evil that Uh, is in us. It's coming from us grant to us our lord to walk by faith.

And not by sight. So that we wouldn't paint ourselves so that we wouldn't betray a generation of our of your children, so that we wouldn't be like beasts towards you. That we would know your goodness to us and Would walk in that. Um, That sanctifying Blessed way that you want us to walk in so that we would Be used by you for helping others to do so.

But most of all So that we would honor you rightly. And not be beastly towards you. Granted, we ask in jesus name, Amen.