

## **Psalms 73:0 ¶ A Psalm of Asaph.**

Asaph is identified as the author of this psalm, as well as Psalms 50 and 74-83. He was one of the men David appointed as leaders of the priestly choir. The Chronicler tells us that he was also a seer or prophet. Though David is recognized as the psalmist of Israel, Asaph was certainly recognized as a musician of similar talent.

*2 Chronicles 29:30 "Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer."*

*Nehemiah 12:46 "For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God."*

## **Psalms 73:1 ¶ Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.**

The psalmist opens with words of praise, acknowledging that God is good to Israel and to those who are of a clean or pure heart. These are words of testimony to what he knows of Israel's history and from his own experience.

I think he starts with these words of praise to show that this psalm will end positively even though it has a pretty negative tone in the beginning.

**Psalms 73:2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.**

**Psalms 73:3 For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.**

**Psalms 73:4 For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm.**

Asaph is very transparent in identifying facts that almost caused him to stumble in his faith—facts that pose the same stumbling block to believers today. He didn't understand why God allowed wicked men to prosper both in health and wealth.

**Psalms 73:5 They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.**

**Psalms 73:6 Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment.**

**Psalms 73:7 Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.**

**Psalms 73:8 They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily.**

**Psalms 73:9 They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.**

These wicked men seemed to live charmed lives. They didn't suffer from the troubles that men in general experienced. Because their lives were so charmed, they became prideful and more oppressive toward others in their arrogance. I think the NLT translation is to the point for verses 6-8: *"They wear pride like a jeweled necklace, and their clothing is woven of cruelty. These fat cats have everything their hearts could ever wish for! They scoff and speak only evil; in their pride they seek to crush others."*

I think the point of verse 9 is that they are brazen in their public rejection of God and His law. They walk around speaking blasphemously (from Hebrew for “corrupt”) with no fear of facing consequences for their wicked ways.

Satan’s deceit is so effective when directed at such men. They truly believe their prosperity entitles them. They either have no clue about the eternal consequences of their actions or just don’t believe there are such consequences.

**Psalms 73:10 Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full *cup* are wrung out to them.**

**Psalms 73:11 And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?**

**Psalms 73:12 Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches.**

Asaph notes that the people that are witness to the words and actions of these wicked men can’t help but question whether God is aware of what they are doing. Does He even notice that the wicked are prospering (while righteous men are suffering seems to be implied).

In other words, Asaph wasn’t the only one being stumbled in his faith.

**Psalms 73:13 Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency.**

**Psalms 73:14 For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.**

Asaph admits that he had begun to question whether it was worth it to strive to live righteously before God. Every day presented new trials and troubles. He couldn’t help but wonder why God was chastening him and not judging the wicked.

Asaph had lost sight of the truth that God’s chastening is a good thing. God only chastens those He loves.

*Proverbs 3:11–12 “My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.”*

*Revelation 3:19 “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”*

**Psalms 73:15 ¶ If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children.**

**Psalms 73:16 When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me;**

**Psalms 73:17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end.**

I liked the NLT for these verses: *“If I had really spoken this way, I would have been a traitor to your people. So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper. But what a difficult task it is! Then one day I went into your sanctuary, O God, and I thought about the destiny of the wicked.”*

Asaph identified an important truth. Our focus should always be on God and His word rather than on the circumstances surrounding us. When Asaph went to spend time in the place representing the presence of God, he was reminded of the eternal future of the wicked—an existence devoid of the presence of God. The thought was very sobering. He certainly didn't envy them that. Implied is the idea that he knew his future was very different—a future that made any suffering in this lifetime worth enduring.

*Romans 8:18 "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*

How blessed are we as Christians today to be able to have the indwelling presence of God in the person of the Holy Spirit! We can talk to Him at any time. Frankly, I carry on quite a running dialogue with the LORD every day. During that precious time, I experience conviction, assurance, peace and love as I share all that is on my heart—even though He knows every thought I have before I do.

Spurgeon made a great application from verse 15: "Would to God that, like Asaph, men would bridle their tongues. Where we have any suspicion of being wrong, it is better to be silent; it can do no harm to be quiet, and it may do serious damage to spread abroad our hastily formed opinions."

**Psalms 73:18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.**

**Psalms 73:19 How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.**

**Psalms 73:20 As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.**

Asaph suddenly understands God's "hands off" approach to the wicked as an act of judgment. He is allowing them to seal their own fate. Once they die, they will realize with great regret the consequences of their evil. This life will be but a dream in light of their new reality. There will be no recourse before the LORD; their eternity is sealed.

**Psalms 73:21 ¶ Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.**

**Psalms 73:22 So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.**

The sobering truth of the fate of the wicked made Asaph realize his own foolishness in questioning God. It grieved him to realize how foolish he had been to envy the wicked and question God. He concluded that he must have appeared like a dumb animal before God before he realized his wrong thinking.

**Psalms 73:23 Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.**

**Psalms 73:24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.**

The psalm takes a more positive turn at this point. Asaph is confident of God's presence in his life and His position of security in Him. Note that he pictures God holding his hand, like a father with a firm grip on his child. The child's security is in

the grip of his father; it is not dependent on his grip of his father's hand. He is confident that God will continue to guide him; and when his life is over, God will receive him to glory.

These are powerful words of faith from a man that lived under the law when the emphasis was on works. It also strikes me when I read the words of Job, David, Asaph etc. as they express their confidence in a future with God after death. Though we may not know the origin of their knowledge of this future, it is obvious that God had revealed it to them in some way.

**Psalms 73:25 Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.***

**Psalms 73:26 My flesh and my heart faileth: *but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.***

What powerful words of love and faith. Asaph's whole being was rooted in his love for God and his desire to be with Him. Nothing or no one on earth could compete. Though his flesh and heart would eventually give out in this life, Asaph knew that God was the source of his being and his future inheritance (from Hebrew for "portion"). He was confident of eternal life in the presence of God.

Scripture affirms this precious truth for every child of God.

*John 14:1–3 "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."*

*Romans 8:16–17 "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."*

*2 Corinthians 5:6–8 "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."*

*1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."*

**Psalms 73:27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.**

In contrast, however, those that reject God will perish; every person that chooses to yield their allegiance to false gods will be destroyed. False gods include anything or entity that is the focus of our worship besides the one true God, the God of the Bible.

**Psalms 73:28 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.**

Asaph is confident that it is good for him to continue to draw near to God and affirms that he has placed his trust in the Lord God. He is determined to declare the works of God to everyone he can.

I think it is of note that Asaph knew that it was up to him to draw near to God. God is ever present and waiting for that choice from every single person. For those who are unbelievers, He is ever waiting with open arms to receive them in faith and repentance of their sins. For His children that have placed their faith in Him, He is ever waiting with yearning for them to seek a closer relationship with Him by striving to live in accordance with His will as revealed in His word.

*2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."*

*James 4:8 "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."*

*John 14:23 "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."*

Another great quote from Spurgeon: "He who is ready to believe the goodness of God shall always see fresh goodness to believe in, and he who is willing to declare the works of God shall never be silent for lack of wonders to declare."