

Psalm 73 begins a compilation of Psalms known as Book #3. Book three covers the Psalms from chapter 73 to chapter 89. Of these seventeen Psalms, eleven of them were written by Asaph (Ps. 73-83); one of them was written by David (Ps. 86); three of them were written by the sons of Korah (Ps. 84, 85, 87); one of them was written by Heman (Ps. 88) and one was written by Ethan (Ps. 89).

Heman, Asaph and Ethan were skilled musicians who were appointed by the Levites to take charge of music worship under David's ministry (I Chron. 16-19). These three were very skilled singers (I Chron. 15:19). Of these three, Asaph was the chief, the one in charge (I Chron. 16:5). He was personally chosen by David to oversee music worship (I Chron. 16:7). Music was a vital factor of worship in both the O.T. and the N.T. and Asaph was obviously a man who took his music ministry seriously.

Psalm 73 is a Psalm written by Asaph, a leader at a time when he was just about ready to quit his ministry. He saw the great prosperity and success of the wicked people, perhaps wicked musicians and he momentarily thought about walking away from his responsibilities.

Let's face it; if you see a musician like Wayne Newton, who makes 25 million dollars a year in Las Vegas, which translates into \$68,493 dollars per day whether he works or not, it can tend to get you a little discouraged when you are a musician who is using your skills and talents for God. Apparently this kind of thing was beginning to bother Asaph and he was about ready to quit.

Thank God he didn't because in this Psalm he tells us some great truth:

WHEN WE FIND OURSELVES THINKING FOOLISHLY ABOUT ABANDONING OUR RESPONSIBILITIES FOR GOD BECAUSE WE SEE THE SUCCESS OF THOSE WHO DO NOT LOVE GOD, WE NEED TO REMEMBER IN THE FUTURE THERE IS AN ETERNITY THAT WILL FEATURE GREAT PROSPERITY FOR THOSE WHO LOVED GOD AND FAITHFULLY SERVED GOD AND ETERNAL POVERTY FOR THOSE WHO DIDN'T.

Asaph is very open and honest in this Psalm. I am certain that there were times when someone connected to David felt like quitting. Let's face it; David was an intense man who found himself in constant war and trouble and Asaph worked for David. He saw wicked people seeming to prosper and David, who was a man after God's own heart, was often hurting and seemingly not prospering. So for one brief moment Asaph felt like quitting. Thank God he didn't.

Now there are three main points that are communicated in this Psalm:

POINT #1 – God is good to those who are His family and those who are right with Him. **73:1**

This is a very important point to always remember—God is good and does good things for His family and for those who are right with Him. He is good to Israel and He is good to any who are pure of heart.

No matter what we see happening in the world, it is good to remember this theological truth.

POINT #2 – One committed to God comes very close to slipping away from God. **73:2-14**

Asaph came very close to chucking it all. He came very close to stumbling in his spirituality and in this passage he gives us three reasons why:

Reason #1 - He was envious of the fact that the wicked arrogant people prospered. **73:3**

He saw wicked, arrogant people who were prospering and it almost got him to turn away from his commitment to the Lord.

Reason #2 - He was envious of the fact of the way wicked people even die. **73:4**

Wicked arrogant people seem to prosper until the day they die. They even die in luxury with fat bodies. They have expensive funerals and the world honors them.

Think of a guy like Robin Williams, who said he was an atheist. He dies and the world honors him. He lives in a mansion; he travels first class; he eats in the finest restaurants and when he dies people show up to his house and put expensive flowers all around and now they are thinking about naming a tunnel in San Francisco after him because he was so popular. That didn't happen for Mr. Miles. No one named anything after him.

In fact, when the Grand Rapids School of the Bible ended up squandering all of the property God gave through Mr. Miles and then merging with Cornerstone, they named a building after a man who tried to undermine Mr. Miles. He is a man who runs around calling himself Doctor because he bought some degrees from a fake school that has been shut down by the state of California. Mr. Miles was the key man of God in regard to GRSBM, not that guy and yet many in this world still honor this traitor to this day. They named a building after him. This is hard to stomach.

Reason #3 - He was envious of the fact that wicked arrogant people seem to lack trouble and turmoil. **73:5**

Asaph saw that wicked arrogant people don't seem to have the same kinds of troubles godly people have. They don't struggle to pay bills. They don't sacrificially give to God. Their children have the finest of everything—they go to the best schools and they travel to exotic places and they drive the best cars.

In fact, he describes these people:

- 1) These people are proud and violent. (73:6)
- 2) These people are bulging in plenty. (73:7a)
- 3) These people let their evil imaginations run wild. (73:7b)
- 4) These people mock those who are right with God. (73:8a)
- 5) These people seem to have high positions in the world. (73:8b)
- 6) These people speak out against God and the heavens. (73:9a)
- 7) These people speak and parade themselves through the earth. (73:9b)
- 8) These people influence many people to return to their way of life and thinking. (73:10a)
- 9) These people are refreshed in abundance. (73:10b)
- 10) These people question and mock the knowledge of God. (73:11)
- 11) These people have an easy and prosperous life that increases in wealth. (73:12)

Asaph was looking at this and looking at himself. He was a Jewish musician who was committed to God and committed to knowing and obeying the Word of God and he was beginning to think that he was the one serving God in vain and that God was not blessing him, but striking him down and chastening him (73:13-14).

Asaph said I look into this world at evil God-mockers and rejecters and they appear to be winners and I love God and His Word and I appear to be a loser. This was really bothering him.

POINT #3 – One committed to God took proper steps to not slip away from God. 73:15-28

This is a masterpiece to see. Remember, Asaph is a leader for God. He holds a very important position. There were six steps he took:

Step #1 - He kept his mouth shut so he wouldn't hurt God's people. 73:15

He kept this matter and struggle between him and God. We all have feelings about things, but most times feelings are wrong and wise is the person who keeps those feelings to himself or herself. Some people run around and talk to everybody. A wise person keeps his mouth shut.

Step #2 - He kept thinking and looking at these things and it was troubling. 73:16

This is important to see. There needs to be much more thinking and much less talking. Asaph did not jump because he felt something; he used his mind to think about things. Also there is something to observe here, if you keep thinking about and looking at the success of the people of this world, it will wear you down. It will wreak havoc with your emotions.

Step #3 - He went to the sanctuary of God. 73:17-20

The sanctuary of God was the place where God's Word was taught and it was here that Asaph got back on track. As he looked into the Word of God, he perceived the way things really were.

It is the wicked who are slipping away and heading to destruction, not the righteous (72:18). It is the wicked who will be utterly swept away in one terrifying moment (72:19). It is the wicked who cause God to despise their very existence (72:20). Asaph realized that the success of the wicked was like a dream and God will wake up and they will be gone.

Step #4 - He confessed his failure. 73:21-22

When Asaph got under the Word of God, he was convicted. When he saw God's Word his heart was pierced and he admitted to God that he was thinking and acting like a senseless, ignorant beast.

Asaph was not afraid to admit to God that he had been a fool. Since he had kept his mouth shut, only God knew of his stupid thinking and when Asaph got into the Word of God, it straightened him out. **He was convicted and he responded to the conviction.**

Step #5 - He considered God's blessings to him. 73:23-24

There are four considerations Asaph realized:

(**Consideration #1**) - God's people are continually in a right relationship with God. 73:23a

(**Consideration #2**) - God was in a personal right hand relationship with Asaph. 73:23b

(**Consideration #3**) - God continued to guide and instruct Asaph through His Word. 73:23c

(**Consideration #4**) - God would ultimately take Asaph to live with Him in glory. 73:24b

Step #6 - Asaph offered praise to God. 73:25-28

When the Psalm begins, Asaph is slipping but when it ends he is worshipping. He gives five reasons for his praise:

(**Reason #1**) - He praised God because he had a relationship with the God in heaven. 73:25a

Think about this reality for a moment.

(**Reason #2**) - He praised God because God was his only desire. 73:25b

When this is your desire, God has done a great work in your life.

(**Reason #3**) - He praised God because God had strengthened him in moments of fleshly weakness. 73:26

Any victory we have ever had over our flesh has come from a strengthening of God.

(Reason #4) - He praised God because in the end the wicked will be destroyed. **73:27**

(Reason #5) - He praised God because God had been good to him. **73:28**

Parting Thoughts

- 1) If you have a relationship with God, you are forever rich.**
- 2) When you have struggles, get into the Word of God; go to church to hear it taught.**
- 3) When you have struggles, go to God in prayer and keep your mouth shut.**
- 4) When you have thought or said something foolish, confess it to God immediately.**
- 5) Any victory we have ever had in our lives is due to the strength given to us by God.**
- 6) When you have struggles, think about all of the blessings God has given to you.**

In 1856 two men moved to Chicago. One man's name was Marshall Field. The other man's name was D. L. Moody. In eternity, who would you rather be?