

Psalm 73 (NIV)

1 A psalm of Asaph. Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. 2 But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. 3 For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4 They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. 5 They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. 6 Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. 7 From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits. 8 They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression. 9 Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. 10 Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. 11 They say, "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" 12 This is what the wicked are like—always carefree, they increase in wealth. 13 Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. 14 All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning. 15 If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed your children. 16 When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me 17 till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. 18 Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. 19 How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! 20 As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies. 21 When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, 22 I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. 23 Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. 24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. 25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. 27 Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you. 28 But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.

Asaph tells us a story that I think we all can relate to. He tells us about his own struggle with living in the world but not being of the world. He reminds us that God is good to his chosen people. He knows that now; but he almost slipped into the pit of unbelief. Why? He envied the unbeliever. They do all of these evil things and yet they still prosper! They get to have all the fun without any of the consequences. That's the way it seemed to Asaph. Doesn't that sound all too familiar today? Don't we find ourselves thinking the same things?

Asaph had reached the point of wondering if all this religion and believing stuff was in vain. He was befuddled and confused until he returned to the truth of God's Word and the sanctity of God's House. Then he understood! Then he saw the terrors of hell that faced the unbeliever. Asaph was almost one of them. "*When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.*" Asaph was so caught up in how unfair it seemed that he was becoming just like those condemned ones.

But God was gracious and didn't abandon Asaph. He was always with him, guiding him, protecting him. Asaph realizes that now. Nothing is more important. "*But as for me, it is good to be near God.*" Dear Christian, truer words couldn't be spoken.