

\* The Heights Baptist Church \* Series: The Psalms \*  
\* Topic: Regaining Perspective \* Psalm 73 \* 6/1/25 \*

MAIN POINT

When we look at self-centered people who seem to be quite successful today, we may be tempted to want to join them. If this is the case, we need to spend time with God to refocus on what is really important.

INTRODUCTION

**Jesus said, “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matt. 7:13-14). With such an obvious choice to make (life versus destruction), why do you think most people will choose the path to destruction?**

**Why might we as Christians be tempted to feel envious of those choosing the broad road?**

People tend to want to take the easy and fun way. In the short term, this might include devoting ourselves to earning money and seeking pleasure. The broad path is easy because it focuses on our desires and whims as our first priority. The hard way requires sacrifice but leads to eternal life. To walk the narrow and less-traveled road, we must surrender our lives to Jesus, and trust that He knows what is best for us.

Today we will be looking at Psalm 73, where a man of God struggles as he observes the lives of those who are out to please self rather than God. Psalm 73 is a picture of one walking the road of surrender. Though he saw many wicked people prospering, he nevertheless chose to stay on the right path—the only one that led to true life in the end.

UNDERSTANDING

*Note to study leader: Psalm 73 is titled, “a Psalm of Asaph”. As a reminder from last week, Asaph was a Levite worship leader in the Tabernacle. He was assigned by King David to be the chief musician who was to minister before the ark of the LORD. He was a gifted prophet and musician who was to extol, thank, and praise the LORD (1 Chr. 6:31-33, 39; 1 Chr. 16:1-14, and 2 Chr. 29:30).*

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 73:1-14

**How would you summarize what was so frustrating to Asaph?**

While Asaph is struggling, the wicked seem to be living the dream.

**Have you ever felt like that? What might make someone wonder whether the path with Jesus is really worth walking?**

The problem seems to be stemming from the fact our focus can get off of God and the hope we have in Him, and on to circumstances.

**How do these verses relate to the teaching of Jesus about the wide and narrow paths?**

It is so easy for us to slip back into coasting. As the old saying goes, the only way to coast is to go downhill.

*“The Christian life is never static. One must either grow in grace, or there will be backsliding and deterioration.” Henry Allan Ironside*

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 73:15-22

**Look again at verses 16-17. What helped convince the psalmist that he was on the right road? Why might meeting with the people of God to worship serve as a reminder that we are on the right road?**

The psalmist had many questions boiling inside him, but when he entered the sanctuary of the Lord, he was reminded of the temporary nature of life. He came to understand that though the narrow road is much more difficult, the destination makes the difficulty worthwhile.

**What do we learn from this psalm about God’s activity in our life as we observe the hedonistic ways of the world?**

Godly and intentional living didn’t always come easily for Asaph, the writer of Psalm 73. He had envied the prosperity and ease of life the wicked seemed to enjoy (vv. 3-4). His own struggles seemed a troubling contrast to their seemingly trouble-free lives (vv. 12-14). He was tempted to give up pursuing the path of righteousness (v. 2).

**What action changed the course of Asaph’s struggle?**

He entered the sanctuary of God. The Hebrew word translated as “sanctuary” (“qodes”) in Psalm 73 means “a holy place”, and is used to describe the Tabernacle.

**What eternal truths changed the course of his thoughts?**

He understood the final destiny of the wicked.

**Contrast the two uses of the words “almost slipped” and “slippery” in verses 2 and 18?**

Asaph had almost slipped, since he was losing the truth about the solid path he was on, while the wicked are the ones who are actually on the slippery ground.

**In what ways are the wicked like a dream when one awakes?**

God in his mercy is allowing the wicked to temporarily thrive in this world. But there is a limit to how long He will extend this grace. One day God will deal with evil, and all of it will be done away with (Matt. 13:40-43, and Rev. 20:12-15). And just like a dream fades when one awakes, so thoroughly will wickedness be removed from Christ’s kingdom.

We need to remember two lessons from this:

- First, the only reason we are not included with the wicked is because we are under the shed blood of Christ, and not because of anything righteous we have done (Eph. 2:8-10 and Titus 3:5-7).
- Second, our non-Christian friends, neighbors, acquaintances, and family members... in fact everyone on earth who doesn’t know Christ, desperately needs to receive Him. And we have been assigned to that task by God (2 Cor. 5:20-21).

**Why is the analogy of us being “a brute beast” before God when we forget these truths paint such an effective picture of our condition when we aren’t focused on God?**

Jude 1:10 describes false teachers in this way. “But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.” God gave each of us a mind, soul, and spirit, and as Christians, we have His Spirit within us. We need to avoid sinking down to the depths of unreasoning animals who respond to life based on instincts and appetites. We need to focus on Christ instead.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 73:23-28

**What was Asaph's final conclusion when he turned his focus back on God? Why might people come to that conclusion only when they have spent time in God's sanctuary?**

No matter what we go through in this life, good or bad, God is with us. He guides us through life and then takes us to heaven to live with Him forever. This eternal perspective is foundational if we are going to live intentionally for God and His glory alone. There is nothing on earth that compares to living in His presence, now and forever. When He is our refuge, we can't help but tell others about Him.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 63:1-4

**David wrote Psalm 63 while he was in the desert. How serious was David about seeking God?**

He sought God earnestly, thirsting and fainting for God.

**Where did David go to look upon God, and behold His power and glory?**

The sanctuary. The Hebrew word translated as "sanctuary" ("miqdas") literally means "holiness". We have here the idea of breaking away from everyday life to get quality time with God. This can be alone in a quiet place, meditating on His word and praying, or in times of corporate worship. We need both.

**What attributes of God caused David to praise God?**

God's power, glory, and steadfast love.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ HEBREWS 3:13, AND HEBREWS 10:24-25

**What do these verses tell us about the importance of getting together with other Christians on a regular basis?**

*"We do it together... as the body of Christ.... I love to worship... You know what I do (on days where it is difficult to praise God) is I stand in the midst of you praising. That's why God has given us a church, because sometimes I can't get it out, but I can stand among people who can. Sometimes I can't read God's word in faith, but I can stand among people who can. Sometimes I can't give thanks, sometimes I don't know what to pray anymore, but I can sit with people who are. There's no recipe for doing any of this alone; none. God says, 'I've given you the body of Christ.'"*  
Pastor Randy Hahn, Sermon at the Heights Baptist Church, December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024

APPLICATION

**What changes do you need to make to ensure you are intentionally focused on keeping yourself on the narrow path that leads to life?**

**Is there something you need to do to better place yourself in both large groups and a small group of believers to help you walk with Christ and worship Him?**

PRAYER

Thank God for being our ever-present help and refuge. Pray that God would give us wisdom to keep our focus on Him. Pray that God would reveal the eternal consequences of decisions and that may lead us toward the wide gate, and the actions we need to take to keep us on the narrow path. Thank God for sending Christ to model this path. Pray that as a group we would become imitators of Christ. Pray that we would remember to regularly enter the sanctuary of God, so we can keep our focus on Him.

## COMMENTARY

### Psalm 73

73:1 What a great start to this Psalm, reminding us of who God blesses. He blesses His chosen people, specifically those who are actively walking with Him. Indeed represents a certainty that the statement is true.

73:2 My feet almost slipping refers to slipping off the path of following Yahweh. Asaph was in danger of choosing to give up on following God, and choosing to follow the ways of the world.

Being envious of the prosperity of the wicked occurs elsewhere in the Psalms. This is a temptation when God's justice on the wicked is delayed (Psalm 37:1).

73:4 Easy time and well fed refer to prosperity (v. 3). "Well fed" is literally "fat bellies," evidence of having more than a person needs (see notes at 17:10-12 and 63:5).

73:5 This is an assessment from observation. The psalmist's own experience seems to be showing him a person's degree of wickedness is directly proportional to the level of their prosperity.

73:6 A necklace signified status and prominence (Dan 5:29); the wicked wore their pride as a status symbol. They also flaunted their success or their malicious violence.

73:7 Eyes and imaginations are parallel, representing the desires of the wicked in what they saw and thought. "Imagination" (Hb maskiyyoth) is also used of idols (Num 33:52; Ezek 8:12). It has the connotation of "idols of the heart."

73:8-9 Heaven is where God dwells, so the mocking of the wicked is directed against God. The image of tongues strutting across the earth further emphasizes their brash arrogance.

73:10 His people could refer to those who were connected with these wicked people, but the shift from plural to singular is awkward. If "heaven" in verse 9 represents God, then it is the nearest singular antecedent. In this case the speech of the wicked even leads God's people astray, something this psalmist would not do with his words (v. 15).

73:11 It was a common belief among the wicked that God did not pay attention to them and would not punish them (Isa 29:15; see notes at Ps 10:11 and 14:1). In fact, God does know everything (44:21; 139:1-12; Dan 2:2; Hos 7:2; Heb 4:13; 1Jn 3:20).

73:12 Always at ease means that the Psalmist felt the wicked did not seem to experience problems (v. 4).

73:13 Washing hands was part of an oath of innocence (see Ps. 26:6-7).

73:14 The psalmist's affliction was in stark contrast to the wicked being "at ease" (v. 12).

73:15 In addition to the normal word for "say" (Hb 'mr), there is another word (Hb spr) meaning "recount" in the sense of something more developed. This is not just stating a fact but developing a story, which was the psalmist's temptation. His "betrayal" would have been to undermine the faith of others.

73:16 "Hopeless" (Hb 'ml) is the same word as that in verse 5 translated "trouble." The wicked did not have trouble, but the psalmist's attempts to understand this phenomenon gave him nothing but trouble.

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73:17 The phrase until I entered... then I understood has caused much speculation by scholars. Exactly what happened in the sanctuary? Suggestions include: the psalmist received an oracle from God, witnessed a theophany, or engaged in ritual acts. It is perhaps best to leave it unanswered and realize the main issue is that Yahweh's presence in the sanctuary enlightened the psalmist. This is what became the psalmist's hope later in verse 28 and seems to be reflective of the principle that nearness to Yahweh (close fellowship with Him) provides a change of perspective.

73:18 There is a contrast with the psalmist's feet "almost slipping" in verse 2 and the slippery places of the wicked.

73:19 "Suddenly" shows that, despite appearances, God's judgment on the wicked is sure and swift (see notes at 37:10 and 37:36).

73:20 The phrase waking from a dream could refer to the psalmist's own state before his change of perspective, but it probably refers to God's waking (arising, meaning "to act"; see notes at 7:6 and 35:23). The dream is equivalent to image and emphasizes as in verse 19 that the swift destruction of the wicked will make their former prosperity seem like a dream.

73:21-22 The psalmist's bitterness apparently blinded him and made him stupid like an animal (92:6).

73:23 Holding someone's right hand refers to protection (Ps 63:8; Isa 41:10,13; 42:6; Jer 31:32).

73:24 Some argue that take me up in glory refers to being honored (similar to the image of the "right hand" in v. 23). However, there is no good reason to doubt that this could refer to life after death. The OT does not develop a thorough or consistent concept of life after death, but the afterlife could have been a belief in Israel, as it was among the other nations (Gen 5:24).

73:25-26 "Flesh and heart" refers to our temporary, earthly bodies. This reinforces the idea of life after death from verse 24. A portion is another way of describing a person's inheritance (see note at 16:5-6).

73:27-28 The presence of Yahweh is the ultimate hope of those who trust Him (15:1; 21:6-7).