

# Psalm 73

by Eli Brayley

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*The sermon explores the temptation of Asaph to envy the prosperity of the wicked and the importance of seeing things as they truly are, in the light of God's word and spirit.*

**Duration:** 40:13

**Scripture:** Psalm 73, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Temptation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the topic of temptation. He begins by referencing a verse that highlights God's goodness to those with pure hearts. The sermon is divided into three sections: the temptation that Asaph faced, how he overcame it, and the results of coming out of that temptation. The preacher emphasizes that many people can relate to this temptation. He also highlights the importance of seeking God's sanctuary to see things as they truly are and finding hope and rejoicing in the Lord. The sermon concludes with a reminder that our hearts can deceive us into thinking that material possessions will bring satisfaction, but true fulfillment is found in God alone.

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## Transcript

Good evening, everyone. I've been told that I've preached too long, so I'll shorten it a bit tonight. Tonight we're going to be looking at Psalm 73, which is a psalm of a man by the name of Asaph.

King David wrote many psalms, and he's called the sweet psalmist of Israel. But when we read in the book of Chronicles, there's another psalmist, and his name is Asaph, and both David and him would make psalms and sing them. And it says they would be glad in the Lord when they made these psalms.

The book of Psalms is actually divided up into five books. So, usually when we talk about the books of the Bible, we say that there are 66 books in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Sometimes I like to say, no, no, there's not 66, there's actually 70.

It sort of throws people for a loop. They think I've got a crazy, weird Bible, but I'm just... But the psalm we're going to be looking at, Psalm 73, is the first book in Psalms. I don't know if you have a heading on it, but mine says, a psalm of a friend of David.

So, let's pray before we... Lord, we thank you for this day that you've given us. We thank you for this evening, God. Lord, we thank you for all the blessings of everyone who's come tonight, Lord.

We see you as you are. We see the truth of the word. Lord, put aside anything in us that hinders.

Take it out, God. Anything in us that keeps us from you, and keeps us from hearing what you truly want to say to us. I pray that you would take pride from us, Lord.

And I pray that the heavens would be open to us. That you would look down upon us in favor. And we would look up and learn from you.

We thank you, Jesus. We should pray to the Lord. Say it with me, if you know it.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation. Amen.

Lead us not into temptation. Well, tonight we're going to look at a temptation. There's many temptations that our study will apply to.

But we're going to look at a specific temptation. Now, Cameron already read it. So, but I don't know if you might remember.

Even to such as thereof. Now here's where the temptation begins. This psalm is divided up into three sections.

We're going to look first at the temptation that Asaph entered into. Asaph almost falling into this temptation. He fell into it and he's struggling.

Secondly, we're going to look at how Asaph got out of this temptation. And thirdly, the result of coming out of this temptation. And this is a temptation that many people have gone through.

If you haven't, I'm sure you have. I have gone through this kind of temptation. And the temptation is, as we're going to find out.

It is thinking that following after God is vain. Thinking that sacrificing this life for God. You know, we've seen something about surrender and following after God.

The world behind me, the cross before me. The temptation Asaph had was, he looked at the wicked. He looked at evil men who didn't fall after God.

And he saw that they prospered in Europe. He saw that evil men had it good in life. Whereas godly men had it bad in life.

And he struggled with this. His temptation was to say, what's all this, Lord? Why does the ungodly have a good life? And the godly seem to have all the struggles and all the trials in life. Why are the godly prospering? This is the temptation that he had.

So let's look together at verse 2. He says here, As for me, my feet were almost gone, and my steps had well nigh slipped. Right? Almost slipped. For I was envious of the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

And if you look over at verse 18. Talking about the ungodly. You see that it says, Surely thou didst set them in slippery places.

Now slippery places. We might go up in Canada. I don't know about Victoria.

I'm not a local here. Do you get ice here? Snow and ice? No. Well, where I'm from in New Brunswick, you get ice everywhere.

And this isn't talking about ice though. It actually says that God sets the ungodly in a slippery place. And what it means in the Bible.

It says he sets them in a slippery place elsewhere in the Bible. In Jeremiah. You can't see where you're going.

And the place that you're walking is hazardous. Any moment you can step and fall and hurt yourself. I don't know if you've ever stumbled around in the dark.

It's dangerous. How much more dangerous is stumbling around in the dark in a hazardous environment. Say, walking across a rickety bridge or something like that.

Where you need to very carefully watch your steps. God has set the wicked in slippery places or in dangerous places. And it's inevitable.

Scripture makes it clear that the wicked will be destroyed. It's inevitable that the wicked will fall. When? We don't know.

Maybe soon. Maybe sooner or later. We don't know.

But they will. They will fall. And Asaph is saying, I almost stepped in the slippery place meant for the ungodly.

Asaph, because of this temptation. Because he was struggling. He said, I almost stepped onto bare ground.

I almost left my security in God. You see, in God, there's no worry. As we'll soon find out.

In God, you don't have to worry about slipping. Your feet are on the solid rock. On Christ the solid rock I stand.

There's no slipping when you're in Christ. See, God is light. There's no darkness.

And Asaph said, because of this temptation. Because I saw the prosperity of the wicked. I was envious.

I said, this is all in vain. I ought to live it up. And indulge myself like they do.

I almost stepped onto their territory. And basically, he describes the wicked like this. He says, there is no pain in their death.

But their strength is firm. They're not in trouble as other men. Neither are they playing like other men.

One thing that Jesus promised the disciples was trouble. He said, in this world, you will have trouble. That's what he promised.

So if you want to follow Jesus, guess what you'll promise? Trouble. You're not promised an easy life. No Christian is promised an easy life.

If you're familiar with the late George Whitefield of the 1700s, a friend of John Wesley, a famous preacher. He said, on this side of eternity, basically while I'm alive, all I expect is trouble to carry across on this side of eternity. Now, the opposite of the ungodly.

The ungodly on this side of eternity, they don't carry across. And they'll do everything they can to avoid trouble. And basically, the life of the ungodly is, at first glance, at first appearance, very pleasurable.

Very pleasurable indeed. And it's just the opposite. They have it well in this life, but in the next life, not so well.

And Jesus himself said that. He said, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. In Luke, he said, woe to you who laugh now, you'll weep later.

He didn't mean it's bad to laugh. He's talking about a certain type of laughing. An evil laughing.

A laughing in a scoffing. And so Asab is saying, they have no trouble, but I'm wracked with trouble all the time. This is crazy.

This is not worth it. Their pride, verse 6, encompasses them above as a chain. Violence covers them as a garment.

I think of some of these great, well, I wouldn't call them great, but they certainly call themselves great, great leaders of the past, suppose Stalin and Russia. Stalin and the Soviet Union. Joseph Stalin lived in luxury while all of Russia.

Stalin, a wicked man, was prospering. And I think that, you know, Solomon says in Ecclesiastes, there's nothing new under the sun. Asab would have probably had the same struggle in 1950 than he did back in his day.

See? He would have looked at men like Stalin. There was men like Stalin back in these days, too. Evil men.

Israel was surrounded by evil nations. And basically, Israel was trying to serve God and follow the law. We have so much struggle.

So, where is the justice? And this isn't fair. This isn't right. And so he began to get envious and thought, maybe God doesn't hear us.

We'll see in just a moment. Because in verse 11, they say, how does God know and is there knowledge in the Most High? I've talked to many non-believers on my travels. I've traveled and preached.

And they think they can get away with it. Of course they do, otherwise they wouldn't do it. You see? And these men, these evil men, they say, I can live all in the sin I want and God doesn't know.

And see, this is the struggle Asab was experiencing. He was stepping into their territory and he was saying, God doesn't know. God doesn't see a difference between the ungodly and the godly.

I might as well just eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow I die. He was stepping into their territory and he was seeing the world as they see the world. You see, there's different ways to see the world.

Your world view and how you see things is going to make a difference in how you live for certain. And so we find in verse 6, they're full of violence and yet they prosper. Verse 7, their eyes stand there with gladness and they have more than the heart could wish.

More than the heart could wish. Now, I want to talk about that. More than the heart could wish is a very deceptive statement.

In the Bible it says this, the heart is... You know what the most deceptive thing in the whole world is? The most fleeting and... The most fleeting and vaporous thing in the whole world that doesn't have a mirage. Your heart. The most deceptive thing.

And wicked above all else. Who can trust it? You can know it. So basically, he says they have all that the heart could wish.

You know what? That's not true. Having stuff, having pleasure, having prospering in this life is not all that the heart could wish. Don't ever let the devil fool you or let your own heart fool you.

Your own heart sometimes crosses and says, Oh, if you only had that new sports car, you would be so satisfied, you'd never want anything else again. That's all you need is that new sports car. All you need is that new television.

All you need is this or all you need is that. And your heart can really fool you to make you think that. And you make you think that, Yeah, I would want anything else after I got that.

I remember as a little boy, I would ask my father for something, and I'd beg him and say, Daddy, if I get this, I wouldn't want anything else anymore. This is all I want. This is the only thing.

Just give me. And I'll be satisfied. You get it, you play with it, and all of a sudden you realize your heart is deceptive.

So, they have all that their heart can wish is definitely deceptive. They think they have all that their heart can wish. See, when God changes your heart, when God opens your eyes, you realize how foolish all that stuff is.

And, as we'll find out later in the psalm and in other places, David says this too, he says, One thing I ask. One thing I want. I only have one desire in my heart, and that's God.

And that is the proper desire. That is a desire that's not deceptive. The things of God and God himself, the desires for Him, that's the thing that's not deceptive.

The wicked man thinks he has all of these desires, but you know what? He doesn't, because he needs to do it again and again and again and again. Young people these days, my age, they go to the bars and they get drunk, and then they sleep around without somebody, it's not even their wife or their husband. And they think that they're satisfying their heart, but they're not satisfying their heart because next week they have to get drunk again, and the week after that, and the week after that, and they're never satisfied.

When they stop doing those things, they have a great emptiness in their heart. I've found, when I come to God, I'm satisfied. When I come to God, my heart has found its place in God, and my heart rests in the life of God.

That's what Jesus meant when He said, I'll give you water, and you'll never thirst again. He's offering to us, this beautiful living water. He says, if you drink this water, you'll thirst, but if you drink the water I give you, you'll never thirst ever again.

Now, one other comment on the heart, Jesus says in Mark 7, and I'll turn there, Jesus says in Mark 7, 21, He says, from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within and defile them in. So, certainly, yeah, they're indulging it.

So Asaph is correct in seeing that they're indulging in the pleasures of their heart, but it's always big deception. And if we be honest with ourselves, we do. The sinful desires, see, it comes from within, it manifests in us.

And the wicked men just indulge and indulge. And Asaph says, where's the justice gone? Why do they have it easy in the end? They are corrupt, verse 8, and speak quickly concerning oppression, they speak loftily, they set their mouth against, basically it just means, they speak blasphemies, they speak high things, and God seems to be silent. We hear, if you go downtown today, a common word, word, on the street, is the name of the Lord.

A common word, is the name of the Lord Jesus. Are men worshipping the Lord when they say it? Are they just saying it, and they replace curse word with the Lord's holy name? Why do they do that? Because they're ungodly, and they're not worshipping God. It's all a big reversal.

And Asaph's saying, God, these men are speaking blasphemies, they're speaking against your name. Why are you silent? And he's envious of their foolishness. Verse 11, how doth God know, and is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world, they increase with riches.

And the final note on the ungodly, to sum it all up, to sum it all up, they prosper in the world. Why? Because the world is in the hands of Satan. And if you remember, that Jesus in the desert was tempted for 40 days.

And when the devil came to him, says in Luke, that he took him up on a high mountain and said, all the kingdoms of the world I'll give to you, because I've got the authority to get Satan and in control of this world, and can give you kingdoms, can give you all the authority, can give you the prestige, can give you the power. So it's in the power of riches, honor, power, authority, in this life, to whomever he wants, to whomever bows down and worships him. And the sad thing is, many, many, many people are doing just that.

And that is, why do the Christians not prosper in this world? Because this is the world, there's a great reaction. There's a great reaction when a person says, like Jesus said, no Satan, it is written, worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve. There's a great reaction that takes place, because Satan wants your worship.

Satan is out to get your worship. And many people worship him, and so they fall. It's so easy, my friends, to be like Asaph, and look at the situation, and be fooled by your heart, and give in to Satan, and worship the things of this life, and he'll give you everything you want.

It's so easy, because it's hard, because it is hard to follow God. So, Asaph is in this temptation. Now, how did he get out of it? What's the key? What is the key? He says, I've cleansed my heart all day long, have I been plagued, and chastened every morning? If I say I will speak thus, behold, I should offend against the generation of my children.

When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. See, now he's, he says in verse 15 and 16, he's considering stepping into their territory. He's considering, saying, hmm, my heart wants to prosper, my heart wants to live it up, nothing seems to be good over here except pain.

But, he says in verse 15 and 16, when I thought of this, it was painful. There was something in him, and it caused him pain. He thought of the children of Israel in verse 15.

When I say, I will be like them, I will speak thus, I'll offend the children of Israel. What about all the children of Israel? And Israel, even such as them. And, don't get me wrong, you can have a pure heart and suffer temptation.

Jesus did. Jesus was tempted, but he never sinned. And, it's because of Atah's pure heart that he was grieved, that he felt pain, and even the thought of going... And verse 17, we find the great release, the great key to coming out of this temptation, out of this mindset, Tina Newman said, until I went into the sanctuary... And you see, there's a place of ultimate seeing when you see things as they truly are.

When you're no longer deceived, and you see things as they are not, as like a barrage, as an image, as a deception, there's a place of seeing things as they are not, and then there is a place of seeing things as they are, truly. It's the place of God. The sanctuary is not the physical sanctuary.

The sanctuary is God himself. The sanctuary is when you come to God, and his presence fills you, and you come before him, and you come before his word, and he fills you with the place of ultimate seeing, when you see things as they truly are, in the light of his word, in the light of his spirit, in the light of the truth. For Jesus said, I am the truth.

And you come to Jesus, and you partake of that truth, and you see things as they truly are. And when Asaph stepped into the sanctuary of God, and understood things as they truly are, in his mind, there was now a distinction between the ungodly and the godly. There was a distinction.

What was it? It was in their end. It was not in this life. It was in their end.

He saw that the ungodly, they live as they do, they prosper, they have all they want, but it is their end. It is their ultimate end that is what is destruction, where God puts them in a slippery place, where they think they're doing well, but they're really in darkness, and any moment they'll fall. And he sees the destruction of the ungodly in verse 18, showing how he set them in slippery places.

Thou castest them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation in a moment? You see, it's all a deception, because when you die, you don't take any of your prosperity with you, and you go into the place of destruction that God has promised, and God cannot lie. You see, it's what he said, I was envious of their foolishness, it's totally foolish, utterly ignorant, absolutely ridiculous.

It's idiotic to live a life for yourself, and for pleasure, and for money, and for gain, and for saving, that's all he did when he died. It's the absolute limitacy. It's the only place in the whole Bible when God calls someone a fool, is someone who lived like that.

And I like, in verse 20, it says, as a dream, when one awakens. And I want to just, this really, this is a wonderful truth, this is a wonderful thing that the inspiration of the Bible has given us, as one awakens from a dream. And, have you ever had a dream? I just believe this illustrates it so well.

Have you ever had a dream where, in your dream, you obtain something, and the dream is so real that when you wake up you think you have it? Have you ever had that? I remember having a dream like that once, and I really wanted this drum set. I'm a musician, I like to play instruments, I don't like to isolate myself from one instrument. And, I really was, you know, had my heart to play the drums.

I really like the drums. And so, I went to bed, and I had a dream, and I had a dream that somehow I got a drum set. And it was in my room, and it was right there, and I was playing it, and it was wonderful.

Wonderful. And it was so real that when I woke up, I was like, huh, I have a drum set. And so I said, I'm going to go into the next room and play it.

And I was just like, something was not right, but I was like, do I have it? It was just so real, you know. So I got up and went into the next room and looked through the door, and no, it was not there. And that's how the Bible likens the ungodly and all their riches.

It's there like a dream. It's not even there. You think it's there.

And then when you die, you wake up, and you realize it was not there. Vanity. It's a wonderful illustration.

If God can put this in your hearts and your minds, if you can see the foolishness of living for the ungodly gain and for this life and not for God, it's as fleeting as a dream. It's as fleeting as a dream. When you think that you have something and you really don't, it's taken from you when you wake up.

As a dream in one awakening, what does profit a man if he gains the whole world and yet forfeits his own soul? Jesus asked the question. He doesn't even answer it because we shouldn't know the answer. It doesn't profit him.

It's the most foolish thing to do to live a life without God. Your whole life is taken from you as a dream if you live a life without God. But you know, asapt in the place of ultimate seeing, where God wants to take us, he doesn't only see the end of the wicked.

I believe he sees the end of the righteous. The end of the righteous, my friends, is not like... The end of the righteous is not like you think you have a drum set and you wake up and it's not there. It's not a slippery place.

The righteous stand for among Jesus and his words. Jesus said, the storms come, the wind blow, but the house stands. And the wonderful thing about the end of the righteous is it's not taken from you.

And you live for God. You have faith in Christ. You were redeemed from this world, the world that Satan has.

You're taken out of it and put in a new kingdom. A kingdom that lasts forever. It's a kingdom that will not pass away.

It never will pass away. And that's what Asaph saw. He said, I saw the end of the wicked.

I saw the end of the righteous. And look at his next thing. He said, I love verse 21 and 22.

It says, My heart was green. I was crimped in my reign. And so foolish was I. Beating himself up a little bit.

How foolish I was to even consider this temptation. How foolish I was to even be envious of the wicked that perish. They're like the grass that grows and then the next they're gone.

I should build up my wealth in this earth. He says, I like, an attitude like that is no different than the animals. Animals just live.

Animals eat. Animals build their home. Animals die.

And he said, How foolish. Oh. And I love the ending of this psalm in conclusion.

First part we talked about was Asaph's temptation. Which many of us can experience. The second part in verse 17 was how to come out of that temptation.

And how to come out of that temptation is to come to the sanctuary of God. To the place of ultimate seeing. When you see things as they truly are.

And the result of coming out of that temptation. The result of being in the sanctuary of God and seeing things as they are. You realize how foolish things are.

But not only that. You rejoice in the Lord. And your hope is found in Him.

He says, Nevertheless, I am continually with thee. I love the whole attitude change of this psalm. There's a great shift in this psalm.

The first part of the psalm is lamenting. He's wailing. He's bemoaning.

The last part of the psalm he says, I am continually with thee. Lord, I'm not going into their territory. I'm staying right here in your territory.

Thou hast held me by my right hand. And that's a wonderful thing. You know, even within that temptation, all along God was there holding you.

All along. Receive me to glory. Receive Him to glory.

Receive Him to glory. Hallelujah. Who am I in heavens but thee? And there was none beside thee upon the earth that I desire.

There is none that I desire but thee. All that foolish envying, the foolish desire of the heart is gone. Who does Asaph desire? Who does he desire? God.

God alone. Let's pray. Thank you, Jesus.

I'm going to pray this final bit of the psalm here because it's so wonderful. Let's bow our heads. Lord Jesus, I pray that you would take us to the place of ultimate seeing, Lord, where we see things as they truly are.

Lord, I pray that you would take every single one of us tonight to the place where all deception, all images, all mirages, all dreams pop, Lord. And you show us the state of man, the state of ourselves, that things truly are God. Lord, we give you praise.

We rejoice in you. We want to be continually with you, Lord. Who have we in heavens but you, O God? That is our goal, Lord, heaven.

And Father, there is none upon the earth that we desire but thee. Lord, we give up all this foolishness, God, all the fleeting vanities of this earth that the ungodly chase after, Lord. All the things that come out of our hearts, the lusts, Lord, the adulteries, the blasphemies, the murder, that proceeding.

Lord, we willingly lay all that down, all of it down at your feet, God, just to desire you because you are the thing that is worth all things, Lord. You are the pearl of great price that we sell. We long to be with you, Lord, and for you to receive us in glory.

God, I pray that you make yourself known here tonight, Lord. And may every one of us tonight, Lord, truly make you the one thing that we desire, God. Thank you, Jesus.

We give you praise, O Lord, for all the things. In Jesus' name we pray. We're going to sing now, Be Thou My Vision.

Three. Lord of my heart, of thee all those to me say Thou art Thou my best God, my day and my night. Waking and sleeping, Thine presence my light.

Yes, so will Thou my true word. I am with Thee and I with Thee, Lord. Thou loving parent, Thine child may I be.

Thou in thy belly may I run with Thee. This God is not. This is our King The Lord may empty face.

He loving parent is Thou and always. Thou and Thou only the first in my heart. Sovereign of heaven I treasure Thou art.

Thou heavens my sun only its joys after there is one part of my Lord God forever be all. Still be my vision O ruler of all. Vision O ruler of all.

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