

# The Certainty of Death

by Eli Brayley

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*Eli Brayley's sermon explores the temptation of envy towards the wicked's prosperity and emphasizes the importance of understanding God's ultimate justice and the fate of the ungodly.*

**Duration:** 30:42

**Scripture:** Psalm 73, Mark 8:36

**Topics:** "Gods Justice", "Eternal Hope"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the temptation of envying the prosperity of the wicked and the struggle of questioning God's justice when the ungodly seem to thrive. Asaph's journey through this temptation, realization of the ultimate fate of the wicked, and the joy found in God's sanctuary are explored, highlighting the fleeting nature of worldly gain and the eternal hope in God.

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## Transcript

and teach us from hearing what you truly want to say to us. I pray that you would take it far 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 to you in expectation, and learn from you. We thank you, Jesus.

I thought maybe, and Kimber mentioned, we should pray the Lord's Prayer together. Our Father who art in heaven, so we just want to say it with me if you know it. So we'll pray it together.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 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, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Lead us not into temptation. Well, tonight we're going to look at 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, but I don't know if you might remember some of the things that were said, so we might look at it again. But it starts out like this. Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of pure heart.

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 struggled with it. Secondly, we're going to look at how Asaph got out of this temptation.

And thirdly, the results 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 a temptation. And the temptation is, as we're going to find out, it is thinking that following after God is vain. Thinking about sacrificing this life for God.

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 ungodly prospering, while the godly suffer? 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, or I 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 a slippery place, 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? Well, where I'm from in New Brunswick, you get ice everywhere.

As a matter of fact, there's a lot of car accidents because of the icy roads. 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, when it says he sets them in a slippery place, elsewhere in the Bible, in Jeremiah, it defines it a little better. It says a dark and slippery place. So basically it's a place where you can't see where you're going, and the place that you're walking is hazardous.

Any moment you could 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 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 on some 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. That's what he's saying. On Christ, the solid rock, I stand.

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

And Asaph said, because of this temptation, because I saw the prosperity of the wicked, I was envious. I was saying, 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 plagued 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, well, we're not going to lie to you.

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, famous preacher, he said, on this side of eternity, basically while I'm alive, all I expect is trouble and to carry a cross on this side of eternity. Now the opposite of the ungodly. The ungodly on this side of eternity, they don't carry a cross and they'll do everything they can to avoid trouble.

And basically, the life of the ungodly is, at first, 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.

And 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 and a scoffing at God. Living it up for yourself now.

And so Asaph 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 about 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 of Russia, Stalin of the Soviet Union.

Joseph Stalin lived in luxury while all of Russia lived in poverty. Stalin, a wicked man, was prospering. And I think that, you know, Solomon says in Ecclesiastes, there's nothing new under the sun.

Asaph would have probably had the same struggle in 1950 that 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, all the while they're looking out at all these other nations who are living it up.

And saying, well we have so much struggle. So Stalin, a violent, bloody man, killing millions, lives it up in a palace, and he's looking up to God and saying, God, what is this? Where is the justice? And this isn't fair. This isn't right.

And so he began to get envious and thought, well maybe God doesn't hear, as 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 Asaph 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.

See, there's different ways to see the world. Your worldview, and how you see things, is going to make a difference in how you live, for sure. And so we find in verse 7, or verse 6, they're full of violence, and yet they prosper.

Verse 7, their eyes stand out with fatness, 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 deceptive above all things. You know what the most deceptive thing in the whole world is? The most fleeting and vaporous thing in the whole world that doesn't, like a mirage, your heart is the most deceptive thing.

And wicked above all else. Who can trust it? Who 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 cries out 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. You make you think that, Yeah, I wouldn't want anything else after I got that. I remember as a little boy, I would ask my father for something, and I'd bang him and say, Dad, if I get this, I wouldn't want anything else anymore.

This is all I want. This is the only thing. Just give me, just because I have that toy, and I'll be satisfied, I won't want any other toys.

You know what? You really believe it, and until you get it, you play with it, and all of a sudden you realize your heart was deceptive of all else. So, 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 you, 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 who'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 unless they're doing those things. When they stop doing those things, they have a great emptiness in their heart.

I found when I come to God, I'm satisfied. When I come to God, my heart is no longer deceptive. 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, it's 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, lastly pride, foolishness.

All these things come from within and defile the man. So, certainly, yeah, the ungodly are basically indulging all the pleasures and all the deceitful lusts that come out of the heart. They're indulging it.

So Asaph is correct in seeing that they're indulging in the pleasures of their heart, but it's all a big deception. See? And if we'd be honest with ourselves, we do know that within our heart we do have the sinful desires. See? It comes from within.

It manifests in our actions, but it comes from within. And the wicked men just indulge and indulge. And Asaph says, Where's the justice gone? Why do they have it easy and yet tough? They are corrupt, verse 8, and speak wickedly concerning oppression.

They speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens and their tongue walketh through the earth. Basically, it just means they speak blasphemies.

They speak high things against God. And God seems to be silent. We hear, if you go downtown today, a common word.

A common 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 the 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 what is their knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world.

They increase with riches. And a 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 give it to whomever I want. I, Satan, am in control of this world and can give the kingdoms, can give you all the authority, can give you the prestige, can give you the power, can give you everything you want if you just bow down and worship me.

So it's in the power of the devil, it is, it's in the authority of the devil to give 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 they're prospering in the world.

Why do the Christians not prosper in this world? Because this is the world of Satan and we do not belong here. That's why we got trouble. It's like, 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 in 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 prosper. And so they prosper. And 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 does he get out of it? What's the key? What is the key? He says, I've cleansed my heart in vain. I've washed my hands in innocence. For all the 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 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.

Hmm. 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 something pained him. And you know what? If you remember in verse 1, he says, truly God is good to Israel even to such as of a pure heart.

And you know, Asaph had a pure heart. 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 Asaph's pure heart that he was grieved.

And that he felt pain at even the thought of going along with the wicked. In verse 17, we find the great release. The great key to coming out of this temptation.

Out of this mindset. We find in verse 17 a new mindset. Until I went into the sanctuary of God and then understood I bare end.

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 or 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. 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 sets 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, Surely thou didst set them in slippery places. Thou casted 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 sin and it's all taken from you when you die.

It's the absolute lunacy. It's the only place in the whole Bible that God calls someone a fool. There's someone who lived like that.

And I love, 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. 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 to one instrument.

And I really was, you know, had my heart to play the drums. I really liked the drums. And so I had a dream.

And I went to bed and I had a dream and I had a dream and 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 gonna go into the next room and play it. And I was just like, something was not right there and 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 in the door and no, it was not there.

It was gone. There was no drum set 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 and you wake up and you realize it was not there. It was all in your imagination. It was all a dream.

It was all vanity. It's a wonderful illustration. If God can put this in your hearts and your minds tonight, then my job has been accomplished.

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 in your own home that's taken from you when you wake up. As a dream when one awakeneth, it's gone.

What does it 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 should know the answer. It doesn't profit him any.

It's the most foolish thing to do to live a life without God. Your whole life is taken from you as a dream when you die if you live a life without God. But you know, asap 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. And the end of the righteous, my friends, is not like a dream. The end of the righteous is not like you think you have a drug 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 like a dream. 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 pricked in my reins, and so foolish was I. I can just see him sort of beating himself up a little bit and say, 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. How foolish I was to think that I should build up my riches in this earth, I should build up my wealth in this earth, but forfeit my very soul.

How foolish. He says, I was like the beasts. He says, a life, 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, 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 content.

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