

(The Man God Blesses) Psalm 73

by Zac Poonen

The man God blesses is one who is willing to suffer here on this earth and is delivered out of all afflictions.

Duration: 55:34

Scripture: Psalm 34:19, Matthew 14:22-23

Topics: "Trials And Testing", "Selfishness And Sin"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that God allows trials in our lives to develop our character and strengthen our ability to stand up for what is right. He points out that many people who seem to be enjoying prosperity and success are actually on slippery ground and will face destruction. The speaker also acknowledges his own struggle with jealousy and bitterness towards the wicked and prosperous. He concludes by highlighting the importance of understanding that our entire life on earth is a testing period and that the essence of sin is selfishness.

Transcript

This is the third of a series on the subject of the man God blesses from the book of Psalms. Now, all of the Psalms are wonderful, but I picked out four of them, which I believe are especially good. Some are, most of them would be familiar.

We looked at Psalm 1 first of all, which shows that the man God blesses is one who avoids sin and listens to God's word and obeys it. Then in a second session, we looked at Psalm 23, which shows that the man God blesses is one who allows God to lead him as a shepherd leads a sheep. And now we want to look at Psalm 73.

I was mentioning in the previous sessions that there are two ways in which we can study scripture. One is topic wise, you go through each topic like sin, holiness, love, grace, conscience, things like that. And the other is verse by verse.

Both are profitable. Many times the messages you've heard are on topics, but here we want, what we want to do is go through Psalm 73 verse by verse. All the Psalms were not written by David.

He probably wrote only about half of them, or a little more than half. Psalm 73 was not written by David. The other two we looked at were written by David.

Psalm 73 was written by a man called Esau, who was one of David's song leaders in the temple. And just as a matter of interest, the subject of Psalm 73 is a question that many, many believers ask. Why do the wicked prosper? Now, David also wrote a Psalm on this, and that's Psalm 37.

It's easy to remember that is the opposite of 73. Psalm 37, where David wrote, but he wrote it from another perspective, where he said, it's no use envying the wicked, because they only last for a little while, and then their time is finished. But Esau writes it from another perspective, in the sense that where David explains what he, how a believer or a righteous man should conduct himself when he sees the wicked prosper, Esau says, that question bothered me.

One of the wonderful things about the Psalms is the honesty of these writers. They were absolutely honest about their doubts, their feelings, and that's why the Psalms are a tremendous comfort to us, because if we are honest, we go through the same type of doubts ourselves. And I think I would be right in saying that almost every believer has probably asked this question, why do the wicked prosper? Why is it God doesn't judge them? Why is it that the righteous suffer so much? So, the man God blesses is one who is willing to suffer here on this earth.

Now, Esau begins with, in the very first verse, with the conclusion that he came to. He says, this is the conclusion I came to, and I'll tell you how I came to it. Surely, God is good to Israel and to those who are pure in heart.

Now, there's a sense in which God is good to everyone in many, many ways, but he's especially good to those who are pure in heart. We must not think that God has forsaken those who are not believers. You know, we talk about God-forsaken places, but actually there is only one God-forsaken place in the universe, and that's hell.

Hell is the only place in the whole universe that's completely forsaken by God. God is not there, and it's awful to be there. This earth is not forsaken by God.

There are so many evidences of God's blessing. Jesus himself said that God makes the sun to rise on the good and the evil. He makes the rain to fall on the fields of the righteous farmer and the unrighteous farmer.

So, the unrighteous farmer gets the blessings of nature too, and health. Health is not a blessing God gives only to believers. There are lots of ungodly atheists who enjoy good health, who live a long life.

If God had really forsaken this earth, and if God was only caring for believers on this earth, I believe that every other human being would be demon-possessed. Demons are just waiting to get into people. Why haven't they got into all the unbelievers in the world? Because of the restraining influence of God upon them.

Now, those folks don't realize it, but it's still true. There's a restraining influence on evil and on demons, preventing them from even getting into millions and millions of unbelievers who are atheists, who have forsaken God. So, in that sense, God is good to many, many people.

They're not grateful. They're not grateful for health and food and blessings that God gives them, but God is still good to them. But especially good, there are experiences of God's goodness that those who are pure in heart can have, which other people can never have.

And those are the permanent things. The rest is all temporary. So, in the second verse, he says, As for me, my feet came close to stumbling.

He says, I almost came to the edge of the cliff, the cliff of doubt and unbelief. Is there a God watching over the things that are happening on this earth? Why is it that the wicked prosper? My steps almost slipped, he says. Because I was envious of the arrogant, of those who were boasters, as I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Now, this is a question that not only Esau had, but some of the great prophets had. In fact, there's one book in the Old Testament. It's called, it's written by the prophet Habakkuk.

It's called one of the minor prophets. Minor because it's only just because it's smaller in size. It's only two or three pages, three chapters.

But the entire book deals with this subject. Why do the wicked prosper? Jeremiah, he was another great prophet, one of the greatest prophets in Israel. And if you get some time, you read Jeremiah chapter 12.

That was his question. Why do the wicked prosper? So, if you have that question too, well, that's, there's nothing wrong in that. What I want to say to you is, there is an answer in scripture.

It doesn't have to shake our faith. We don't have to fall over the cliff of unbelief. When we see evil people not being judged, justice not being given to the righteous, how injustice prevails and evil is on the throne.

And those who are honest and upright and godly usually have a difficult time on this earth. There is an answer for it. But the man God blesses does not lose faith despite what he sees.

And Asaph is honest here. He says, I was jealous. He says, these fellows who don't care for God, who cheat, tell lies and do all types of things like that seem to prosper.

And here I am. What's the use of me living like this? That's the question. And the reason was that, you'll see that later on, his problem was because he was looking at those people and not at God.

And when we look at people and not at God or his word, we have many doubts and many questions. So, now he describes these people. He says in verse four, there are no pains in their death.

That means they live long lives and they don't seem to be sick. Sickness comes to believers and unbelievers. There is no pains in their death.

They don't, they seem to have a peaceful death despite having lived a wicked life. Think of some of the wicked dictators that have lived on earth through the centuries and through the millenniums of the history of the human race. They've lived long lives.

We would wish that some of them had been killed. They were young, but they've destroyed people, destroyed countries. And yet they live on and on and on and on and on and on and on.

And we wonder why God doesn't do anything despite people praying. Sometimes these evil dictators, it's right from the first centuries of Christianity, have tortured God's children. And yet there are no pains in their death.

They're healthy. They're not in trouble as other men. They don't seem to have so many sicknesses.

And they're not played like the rest of mankind. Whereas Christians sometimes find it so difficult. I know in India, many, many people in our churches find it difficult to find jobs where they can live righteously.

That's true in every country here too, I suppose. But where they can earn an honest living without having to tell lies, without having to cheat, without doing anything against their conscience. The number of jobs one can find where one can do that job with a clear conscience becomes less and less and less.

As there's increasing bribery and corruption everywhere in the world. It's very difficult to be a Christian. The Bible says that in the last days, it's going to be very difficult to be a Christian.

To keep one's conscience. And that's why so many Christians tend to compromise. Because they say, is it possible to live an upright life in this world? The answer is yes, it is.

In every generation, in every country, it is possible if we trust in God. So, it says here, they're not played like mankind. And because despite their evil, despite all the evil they have done.

And despite the harm and cruelty they have shown to other human beings. No judgment has come upon them. I mean, there are people living like that in the world today.

Cruel dictators who run countries where they've done harm and evil to many, many. There are many nations like that. And because of that, they are proud.

Pride is their necklace. It says here, they wear cruelty like a dress. Cruelty is their dress.

They are violent and cruel towards other people. No tenderness or sympathy in their life to human beings. And yet, they're healthy and strong.

The imaginations of their heart run riot. Verse 8, they mock God's people. They speak wickedly.

They speak from a pedestal where they think they are lords. And they even speak against God. Verse 9, as their tongue parades through the earth.

Now, this is a very accurate description of wicked people through the centuries. And they use their tongue to boast about themselves. Because judgment has not come.

And therefore, verse 10, God's people return to this place. That means they return to this subject again and again. They return to this question.

Why do the wicked prosper? So, God's people have that question. And they keep coming back to this question. And when it says, your waters of abundance are drunk by them, it's an abundance of perplexity.

That means, I don't seem to get the answer. The more they come back to this question, the more perplexed they are. They have to drink these waters of perplexity and sometimes discouragement, when they see injustice all around them.

And then, sometimes God's people begin to wonder. Verse 11, does God really know what's going on? Sometimes, they can even begin to doubt. Is there really a God up there? Is it all make-believe? Am I just imagining all these things written in the Bible? Is it really true? Is there knowledge with the Most High? Verse 11.

And again, He talks about these wicked people. They're always at ease. They're increased in wealth.

It's almost as though they never have to lift a finger. They're born in the lap of luxury. And they're wicked.

And then, this is the question that also comes to many, many, many Christians. He's honest. That's what I appreciate about this man.

He's absolutely honest. He says in verse 13, it looks as if, like one paraphrase puts it, I've been stupid to play by the rules. Is it worth it? Is it worth it to keep the rules? Is it worth it to keep God's law? Why take the trouble to be pure? Verse 13, why take the trouble to be pure if I don't get anything out of it? See, there lies the problem.

The essence of all selfishness is, what will I get out of it? And when a person comes to Christ and also still has this question, what will I get out of this? He hasn't understood what Jesus came to save us from. The essence of all sin is selfishness. The problem with man is that man is centered in himself.

And salvation from sin is salvation from being selfish and being self-centered. And if we don't see it like that, we haven't understood what Jesus came to save us from. He didn't come to save us just from habits like smoking and gambling and harming other people.

He came to save us essentially from the root of all these sins, which is selfishness and self-centeredness. All the depth there is in the world is because man is self-centered. What will I get out of it? And when people come to Christ, keeping this question, okay, I'll come to Christ, but what will I get out of it? They're never going to be saved.

God created man to be centered in himself. It's like the, think of the solar system. God created the solar system years ago and it runs perfectly without any collisions among the planets because every planet is centered in the sun.

It goes around the sun as the object. And for, you know, for, if you read history, you know that for thousands of years, many people who hadn't understood the geography of the universe thought that the earth was the center of the universe. And they thought everything was going around the earth.

It's good to think like that, but it's not true. You know, to imagine that the sun goes around me and the moon goes around me and all the millions of stars go around me. And of course, I'm the center of the universe.

And that's what people thought for thousands of years. It was only about six or seven hundred years ago that some man, I think it was Copernicus, first of all, who decided to question that and say, is it really true? And he discovered it was not true. Imagine if the earth one day decided, well, I'm not going to go around the sun.

I've had enough of going around the sun. I've gone around the sun for many thousands of years. I'm going to stop and let the sun go around me.

What's going to happen? You know what will happen? There won't be any change of seasons. There won't be any winter or summer or any change of seasons at all. And gradually, everything on earth will die.

Life prevails on the earth because it obeys God's law of being centered around the sun. Death comes in as soon as it disobeys that law. That's what happened to Adam.

God created Adam to be centered in him, in God. And Adam rejected that center. So what am I going to get out of it? If I'm going to get something from this tree of knowledge of good and evil, like the devil says, I'm going to take it.

And that's how death came. And we live in a world where we all have that poison, which we got from Adam. What am I going to get out of it? If I serve the Lord, what am I going to get out of it? The question we need, a truly spiritual Christian, ask this question.

What's God going to get out of me in my one earthly life? And I want to say to all of you, my dear brothers and sisters sitting here, there are two types of Christians. One, those who have come to Christ to get something for themselves. It may be salvation from hell.

It may be healing. Okay. God receives you even on that basis.

That's the wonderful truth of the gospel. Even if you come for, you know, people came to Jesus for healing. He said, sure.

The prodigal son, you know the story of the prodigal son. He'd gone away from his father for many years and ruined all his father's property and wasted his father's money. When he came back, he didn't come back because he wanted to honor his father or any such thing.

He came back because he was hungry. He wanted food. And he came back to his father's house for food.

And the father said, come right in. You know, that's what Jesus taught us about God. That even if you come to God with an utterly, utterly selfish motive, he still receives you.

You come for healing. God says, come. He's so happy to see you come back to him that it doesn't matter which motive you came with.

That's how God is. And the thing is that once we come back, I mean, it would have been a terrible thing after the prodigal son saw the tremendous love of his father, if he continued to stay there only for food. And that's the problem with a lot of Christians.

They've come to the Lord, maybe with a selfish motive in the beginning to escape hell or for healing or, you know, maybe they were in some problem or some difficulty. They wanted a job or something like that. They came to the Lord and the Lord gave them a job.

The Lord gave them many things. But if they continue to stay there as babies, this is the mark of a baby, spiritual baby, that he's come to God only for what he can get himself. Then he has all these doubts that plague his mind because he's never been saved from his selfishness.

And that is the reason why such people never get an answer to their question. So that's the thing. You know, he says, well, what have I got out of all this? You know, I've wasted my time following the rules and wasted my time trying to keep myself pure.

And what's the result? Verse 14, I have been stricken all day long and chastened every morning. Now, do you think that when you become a righteous person, you're going to have no more problems? You're going to have more problems, actually. The Bible says in Psalm 34 and 19, many are the afflictions of the righteous.

I don't know whether you're familiar with that verse. Many are the afflictions of the righteous. Psalm 34, 19.

If you go to the New Testament, it says in 2 Timothy 3 and verse 12, all those who live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted in any century, in any country. The persecution may take different forms. It may be that you have a problem in your workplace with your boss because you stand up for Christ.

I worked in the Indian Navy and I know the number of problems I faced when I had to stand up to my senior officers and say, I'm sorry, sir, I'm a Christian. I can't do that. And that causes problems.

Persecution can take on different forms and shapes. But if you stand up for the Lord and stand up for what your conscience tells you that you cannot do as a Christian, you're going to have problems. Every age in every country.

So the afflictions of the righteous are many if they determine to live righteous and stand for righteousness. Of course, if they compromise, then of course, they can escape those problems. It's like Daniel's three friends.

They were thrown into the fire because they refused to bow down. It was a small thing. And, you know, I sometimes thought those their friends could have suggested, listen, why don't you just nod your head a little bit? At least just you don't have to go all the way down.

And you know how the devil tells us just a little bit or he sometimes he says, why don't you bow down and then afterwards go and ask God to forgive you. Then you've got both. You've escaped the fire and you still got back into fellowship with God.

You know, do a wrong thing because you know that you can always go back to the Lord and ask him to forgive you. So you escaped out of that trouble by telling a lie or cheating or something and then come back to God. Well, never prosper.

Such Christians never prosper. Never. There's no backbone in their life.

But a true Christian, one who seeks to be righteous will have afflictions. But the rest of that verse, I read only how I spoke, said only half that verse. Psalm 34 19 says many are the afflictions of the righteous, but you know, the rest of the verse, the Lord delivers out of all of them.

It's just like he delivered the three friends of Daniel. So we're not going to face less problems when we obey the Lord. I think of a story in the Gospels where we read that Jesus told his disciples, it's in Matthew chapter 14, Jesus told his disciples to, after feeding the 5,000 to cross over to the other side in the boat.

And the verse there says Jesus compelled them. In other words, they didn't want to go. He compelled them to get into the boat and go across.

And the next verse, it says there was a terrific storm. Now, when you obey the Lord, what do you face? A storm. Now, if they had not obeyed the Lord and stayed on shore, they wouldn't have faced the storm.

But then they wouldn't have experienced the mighty power of the Lord to still the storm either. Now, which do you prefer? To stay on the shore and experience nothing, no problems, or to go out into the sea? Because the Lord told us to go face the storm and experience the mighty power of God that can still every storm. I'd choose that any day.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers out of all of them. But Asaph, he couldn't understand that. He said, why am I being stricken all day long? There's a verse in Hebrews chapter 12, which says, if you are without discipline, then you're not a child of God.

Because a good father disciplines his children. And God is a good father. He disciplines his children.

It's a mark of his love. I want to tell you this. If you can do something against your conscience, violate your conscience, I don't, I'm not talking about accidental sins or unconscious sins or some of those sins, which we suddenly do under pressure, like you suddenly lose your temper, even though you didn't want to.

I'm not talking about those things. I'm talking about where you knew this was wrong. And you deliberately violated your conscience.

And you did it. And after that, you go on for some time. And God doesn't discipline you for that.

I'd say your condition is pretty serious. I never want to be in that state. I want God to discipline me when I've gone astray.

Because if God doesn't discipline me, Hebrews chapter 12 says, you're probably not his child at all. I mean, you don't discipline those disobedient children in your neighbor's house, do you? No. They may be doing things 10 times worse than your children, but you leave them alone.

That's exactly what the Bible says. Well, I hope you're not one of the neighbor's children whom God's left alone. That even though you do something wrong, he leaves you alone.

It's a pretty serious thing. The mark of God's love is that he disciplines us. I don't know whether you know this verse.

I don't want you to turn to it. I'll just read it to you. It's in Revelation chapter 3 and verse 19.

Jesus says, those whom I love, I discipline. Those whom I love, I discipline. Now there's another verse that tells us God so loved the world that he gave us his son.

So I say, when we are young children, spiritually babies, you ask a spiritual baby, how do you know God loves you? Jesus died for me. Absolutely right. But as you grow in the Christian life, you've got one more answer.

How do you know God loves you? He disciplines me. Have you come to that place where you can say more than, I know God loves me because Jesus died for me? That you've gone beyond that babyhood stage to the adult stage, I've got one more reason why I know God loves me. When I go astray, he disciplines me.

When I do something wrong, he doesn't let me go. That little thing that happened was to teach me a lesson. Take it seriously.

God disciplines us through sickness, through financial difficulties, through different problems. And if we can say, Lord, what are you trying to teach me through this? I believe we can grow to maturity. So Esau couldn't understand that.

Why am I being stricken? That's because you're a child of God. Why isn't God smiting those others? That's because he's his neighbor's children. That's the answer.

And, but you know, Esau had all these doubts. But there was one wonderful thing about this man, not apart from his honesty. His honesty was wonderful.

But another thing, I tell you, here's a good example to follow. He said in verse 15, if I had said, I will speak thus, I should have betrayed the generation of thy children. He was saying, I had all these doubts in my mind, but I kept quiet about it.

Because if I had spoken about it, I would have stumbled some of the young believers. You know, there are some doubts you have in your mind that you should never talk about. How tragic it is when believers begin to openly express their doubts. I'll tell you whom you should express them to.

Go to a mature godly man or believer and say, brother, I have these doubts. Can you help me? That's okay. But if you begin to express them publicly in a meeting or to young believers who don't know the answer, you're going to confuse them.

And that's the wisdom of this man Esau. He had all these doubts in his mind, but he said, I better not speak about it. There must be an answer.

I don't know the answer yet. You know, faith. Some people talk about faith and reason as being opposites.

It's not true. The Bible says, trust in the Lord with all your heart. That's faith.

And don't lean upon your own reason. Proverbs 3, 5. That does not mean that faith is against reason. No.

It just means that faith is beyond reason. You understand? It's like a child in the kindergarten or the lower class may know addition. But you talk to him about long division or multiplication.

He doesn't know what that is. Does that mean that multiplication is against addition? No. It means multiplication is beyond addition.

And this little boy hasn't come to this class, to the grade yet, where he knows anything about multiplication. All he knows is addition. He knows 2 plus 2. But he doesn't know what 234 multiplied by 687 is.

He doesn't know what that is. So, that's where faith is. Faith is beyond reason, but not against reason.

So, however clever we may be, the cleverest person in the world, faith is beyond that. There are things which the cleverest person in the world can't understand, but which are still true. We've got to understand that what we need is not cleverness, but humility.

There are certain things that humble people understand, which clever people never understand. That's what Jesus said. He once said in Matthew 11, 25, I thank you, Father.

You've hidden these things from all the clever, intelligent people in the world, and you've revealed them to babes, to those who humble themselves. So, if you want to understand the things of God, what you need is not cleverness, but humility. So, he recognized there must be an answer somewhere out there, but I'm never going to say anything that will confuse the weaker believers or younger believers.

Sometimes parents are very foolish to express their doubts in front of their little children, and the children all get confused. Follow Asaph and say, well, I don't want to confuse younger ones. Recognize that, you know, this is what humility means, part of humility.

My mind, the most brilliant mind in the world, its capacity is that of a little cup. God's wisdom is like an ocean. Is it surprising that the ocean doesn't fit inside the cup? Even if it's a big cup, you know, we compare IQ with each other.

Somebody's got 75 and somebody's got 200. So what? The cup is one inch bigger. I still can't contain the ocean.

God's wisdom is so great. Humility is to acknowledge that even if my IQ is 250, my cup cannot contain the ocean. God's wisdom is way beyond that.

There are things that I can't understand about God. The things that I'll never understand about God till I see Jesus face to face when he comes from heaven. That's humility.

To acknowledge there are many things we don't know. Even in relation to each other, there are things another person knows which I don't know. How much more God? So to acknowledge that is humility.

So he says in verse 16, he hadn't got that answer. So when I tried to understand all this, it was troublesome in my sight. Like one paraphrase says, I got a headache trying to understand all this.

How is this? Why is it the wicked are prospering? And here's the answer. Until I came into the sanctuary of God. There's only one place where you can get answers to these type of questions.

That's in God's presence. And it's only the humble person who can come into God's presence. You know, in the Old Testament, they had a tabernacle.

And there was one section of that tabernacle called the most holy place where God dwelt, where nobody could go. It was blocked off with a thick curtain. And the Bible says that when Jesus hung on the cross and died, that curtain was in the temple was torn, teaching us that now we can go right into the sanctuary of God, right into God's presence.

Every one of us, because Jesus died on the cross, took our sins, rose up from the dead. In his name, we can go right into God's presence. And there we find the answer as to why God has allowed it to be like this.

When he went there, he got the whole picture. He saw that God's ways are not man's ways. He saw that man has been kept on earth for 70 years, 80 years or 100 years to test.

Most people don't realize that our entire life on earth is a testing period. We're going through an examination. The examination began the day we became old enough to reason and understand whatever age that was, three, four, five years old.

We begin to understand the examination began. And we're still writing the examination. Very often we don't realize it.

The day we die, God will collect the examination paper. The day of judgment, he'll value it and tell us what we got. Yeah.

When he came into the sanctuary of God, he realized this. And verse 18. Surely you have, even though they're wealthy, they're on slippery ground.

That's what he realized that a lot of these rich people who are wicked and cruel and live long lives and who seem to be enjoying themselves, they're on very slippery ground. He realized that in the sanctuary of God, whereas he realized that his own feet, even though he was poor and going through trials, was on a rock as far as eternity was concerned. Poverty and trials that God ordains for his children are sometimes to make us men and women of character that can never be produced any other way.

In the sinful world, we've seen in many places in India that the children of the rich and the wealthy and the powerful are spoiled children. They have plenty of money. Their fathers are such important people.

They can get them out of any problem they get into with the police or anything. They're spoiled. They don't have character.

And if you read, even in a worldly standpoint, you read the story of the biographies of some of these great inventors and people who, great scientists, many of them came from very poor surroundings. Some of them were so poor there was no electricity in their homes to study under the lamppost. It's people who come through trial and difficulty, children who've come through trial and difficulty.

Sometimes the father is dead or something like that. And they've come through difficult situations in life who've developed character. And God in his great wisdom does not allow his children to be ruined whether it's by money or by sin.

He wants to develop character in us. And that's the reason why he takes us through trials and gives us character, gives us a backbone to stand up for what is right. So he saw that these other people are in slippery places.

And quickly they go to destruction. How they are destroyed in a moment. Death is so sudden.

And they are utterly swept away by sudden terrors. And like a dream when one awakes. You know, one of the things that the Bible says is that this whole life is like a dream.

People are, the world is full of people who are spiritually speaking, asleep. And I'm sure you've had dreams like you and I have had dreams which were so realistic that it's almost as though we were there. And when we wake up we're surprised that we're not there.

Dreams can be so real. And the Bible says that the world in which we live is as unreal as a dream. But who understands that? The real world is the one that's going to come after this world is over.

After Jesus comes back. That's real. That's eternal.

The Bible says even the wealth that you acquire, it's like getting rich in a dream. Okay, you got rich. But when you woke up, where was it all? That's what he says here.

When this, this, you wonder why this fellow is becoming so rich and he's enjoying himself so much and he's so wicked and evil. Then he wakes up. The whole thing was a dream.

Eternity is going to reveal that. Like when one awakes, Lord, when you are aroused, when you begin to despise that image, when you, you're going to show them that that image they had in their dream, their

form they had in their dream was all unreal. The righteous person recognizes it now.

You know, Jesus spoke about laying treasure, laying up treasure in heaven, that there are riches we can have in heaven when we don't have much on earth. And there are people who have much on earth who may not have much up in heaven. Verse 21.

When my heart was bitter, bitter because, he's honest here, because of the prosperity of these wicked people, I was pierced within, pierced with jealousy. He says, actually, now I realize that I was senseless and ignorant, just like an animal, like a beast before thee. How did he realize that he was like an animal? An animal thinks only of this life as everything.

You know that. A dog doesn't think about eternity. No animal thinks about eternity.

An animal thinks only of this life. This life is everything for an animal, whether it's a small animal or a big one. This life is everything.

And what he's saying here is every human being who lives only for this life is really no better than an animal. You take care of your children, so do the dogs and the cats and the pigs. It doesn't make you any better than them because you take care of your children.

You go get food for your children, so do the animals. What's an animal interested in? Food, sleep, sex, fight for your rights, protect your territory. That's it.

And when a man lives for just those things, it's like it says here, I was like an animal, like a beast before thee. But he says, now I've realized it because I came into God's presence. You know, that's why I say, come into God's presence.

And if you can't, you don't have the ability to come yourself to hear these things, at least come to church on Sunday and hear God's word so that once in a week, you can be shaken out of your dream and shown the real world, even if you sleep the rest of the week. But you wake up one day in a week and realize which is the world that's going to remain forever after this world is over. In the sanctuary of God, we get light on these things.

And so when he came to the sanctuary of God, what did he realize? One wonderful thing is this, that nevertheless, nevertheless, verse 23, I'm continually with thee. I praise God for that. Lord, in spite of all these terrible thoughts going through my mind, you still stood with me.

You didn't sort of give up on me. You know, God is so patient. He realizes all these doubts and thoughts going through the mind of his child and he does not forsake us.

And he also realized that ultimately, that is the important thing, that God is with me. And he says, God gently led me. He took hold of my right hand and verse 24, guided me to see the truth and will one day lead me with those same hands into glory as well.

So he realized when he came to God's sanctuary, that the most important thing in life is to have God with you. I illustrate that sometimes to the children back home. I like this.

I'm going to write it on a board. I write a zero. I said, how much is that worth? Zero.

One more zero. How much is that worth? Zero. Supposing I write a hundred zeros.

How much is that worth? Zero. Call that money, call that people who are with you or anything. What is it that gives value to all these zeros? If you put a one in front of it, suddenly the value changes.

Even if it's only one zero. That's like having God with us. If God, I may be a zero.

Okay. I acknowledge I'm a zero, but so are you. Okay.

You are 5,000 zeros against this one zero. What does it matter? But if I have God with me, you can have 6 billion zeros on the other side, all the people on the earth. And if God is with me, that's the meaning of God before us, who can be against us? Lord, you are continually with me.

That's the thing that makes me recognize that this is the most important thing. Wealth, comfort, keep on adding zeros. It's all worth nothing if you don't have God at the beginning.

Now, I'm not saying it's wrong to have wealth or comfort. I say have that one at the beginning. God must be at the beginning.

Then these things have value. Otherwise they have zero value. We need to recognize that.

And so he says in verse 25, whom have I in heaven but thee? I want to tell you that those who are going to look for comfort are going to be disappointed in heaven. Those are looking for Jesus are going to be very happy in heaven or on earth. You know, a true Christian would pray like this, Lord, I don't want to go to heaven.

I want to be where you are. I mean, if a husband and wife are deeply in love with each other, and that's our relationship with Jesus, his husband and her wife, would that wife be happy to go to a huge palace where her husband isn't there? Or would she prefer to live in a hut if her husband is in a hut? It's like that. It's not a question of whether it's a palace or a hut.

It's a question of where is my beloved? And this is the attitude of the true disciple of Jesus. It's not a question of, oh, the golden streets, and no more tears, and it's going to be wonderful up there in heaven. I say, well, I'm not interested in all that.

To me, Jesus is there. Is that what makes heaven for you? I'd be ready to go to hell if Jesus is there. Sure.

Because that will become heaven for me immediately. In fact, you know, the real gospel is this, that it offers us two heavens, one right now, because Jesus can be with us now, another one after we die. What is heaven? Thou art continually with me.

Whom am I in heaven but thee, Lord? And on earth, I desire nothing but you. That man, you can never shake that man who desires nothing but Jesus. Lord, if I have you, I have everything.

If I don't have that one in front of all these zeros, all these zeros are worth nothing. But if I have you, Lord, I have everything. And you can add whatever zeros you want after my life.

That's up to you whether I have them or don't have them. It doesn't make a difference. If you're there, that's enough.

That's the true disciple of Jesus. And I believe that's one of the most wonderful verses in the entire Bible, which expresses the heart of a true disciple of Jesus. Please remember this verse all your life.

If you are a man or a woman who says, Lord Jesus, I don't desire anything in heaven but you. I'm not looking for comfort or gold or anything. I'll sit on a throne or have some empty crown put on my head.

No, I'm not interested in all that. I'm going to see you. I'm going to be with you.

I'm going to see the one who loved me and died for me enough to come to this rotten earth, to pull me out of this pit and to take me to glory. That's the one I want to be with. I don't want anything else.

And here on earth, Lord, that's all I want here on earth too. If you give me other things, well and good. If you don't give me, it doesn't make a difference because you're there.

It's the relationship of a husband and wife who are so deeply in love with each other, it doesn't make a difference whether they live in a hut or a palace. A Christian who's like that will never, never be discouraged on this earth, no matter what happens or what doesn't happen. That's true discipleship.

My flesh and my heart may fail. Here's a verse for those who got weak hearts or are in danger of heart failure. My flesh and my heart may fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Those who are far from thee will perish, even if they have wealth, even if they have live a long life. Thou has destroyed those who are unfaithful for me. But as for me, look at this lovely verse 28.

There's only one thing that I consider good for me, that I am near God. I have made the Lord my refuge and I'm going to go around talking about his wonderful works in my life. That's how he comes to the conclusion in verse 1. Surely I don't have any doubt in my mind that the wicked prosper, that there are a lot of things I can't understand, my cup can't contain this ocean, but one thing I know, the Lord has forgiven my sins.

He's on my side and that's all I want. Amen. That is [p o o n e n dot o r g forward slash z a c](https://www.poonen.org) for video messages, audio messages and books by Zach Poonen that can all be downloaded freely.

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