



PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

PSALM 73:1-3, 12-13, 16-18, 21-26

LESSON: ASAPH'S LAMENT — June 19, 2022

INTRODUCTION:

¹Psalm 50, 73-83 are by Asaph. We can read about Asaph in two books of the Old Testament: Chronicles and Nehemiah. We learn four things about Asaph:

1. his father was Berechiah (1 Chronicles 6:39).
2. he was a music leader (1 Chronicles 15:17 ... this verse also calls Heman and Ethan music leaders).
3. he was a seer (2 Chronicles 29:30) ... a seer can "see what will happen", it's another word for "prophet."
4. he lived at the same time as King David (Nehemiah 12:46).

In 1 Chronicles 25: 1 - 2 we read this:

25:1 David and the leaders of the army made these people separate. They were the sons of Asaph, the sons of Heman and the sons of Jeduthun. Their job was to prophesy. They had to make music with harps, lyres, and cymbals. **25:2** Here is a list of the men that did this work. From the sons of Asaph (there are) Jaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah and Asarelah. Asaph told the sons of Asaph what to do. Asaph prophesied with help from the king.

"*To prophesy*" means to tell people what God thinks and what He is going to do. They did this with music. Maybe this means that they sang what they prophesied. Asaph was the leader of "*the sons of Asaph*." And it became the name of a music group long after his death.

The Theme: Faithful living in a corrupt and unfair world. This theme of Psalm 73 will show us how to find confidence to live faithfully in a corrupt and unfair world; one in which the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, and God seems inactive. Asaph is a godly man, a man who walks with God, prominent in his culture, representing God, serves before God in the tabernacle, appointed by the king, singing, playing instruments. This is his outward appearance, but he's about to show us his inward struggle and turmoil. We all go through it. A "lament" is to mourn aloud; wail; express great sorrow or regret, grief in music, poetry, or song form.

LESSON: I. GOD'S GOODNESS PSALM 73:1-3

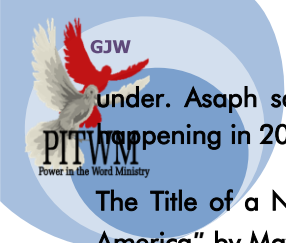
73:1 Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. Asaph begins with the goodness of God, and we should always do the same, for God is truly good. But he makes it a point to say that "*Truly God is good to Israel*." No matter how Israel had turned their backs on God, and been rebellious to Him, God had been truly good. No matter how many times they got into difficulties and needed God to get them out, He did. He always sent help. He always delivered them. *And especially to those who are of a clean heart.*" This means the people that love and obey God. There are other people in Israel that do not love and obey God.

73:2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. Now, he's transparent about himself, explaining that his feet came so close to the edge of the cliff, that his steps were slipping, and was almost gone, meaning (another translation-NCV) he almost stopped believing; he almost lost his faith. You can come so far to the edge that you can't tell what was truth, and what was a lie; what was real, and what was false; what you think you saw, or what the devil tried to make you see. Or what you wanted to do all along.

People video the craziest things: A toddler in a bathing suit is walking all over the perimeter of a swimming pool waiting to see if they would go over the edge of the pool. Yes, the baby scoots down into the water and the one videoing reaches over and catches the baby's arm as they go down into the pool under water and keeps filming as the baby walks by to get to another spot or even the diving board. Each time the baby literally gets to the edge and even falls into the water, going almost

¹ <https://www.easyenglish.bible/psalms/psalm073-taw.htm>
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under. Asaph says he almost slipped, his feet were almost gone, but what about going under. You see that's what's happening in 2021-2022 pastors that are quitting, retiring, can't handle the stress any longer, and throw in the towel.

The Title of a News Report says "Religious leaders Struggle with Burnout, Depression, and Anxiety—just like the rest of America" by Maya Jaradat (May 11, 2022). One started to have a panic attack. It took him several months to acknowledge it. He stepped down. This is happening across the nation after Covid. Some from burnout and mental issues causing many to resign. There have been a rise of house churches or small worship groups where they share both prayers and their lives. They want to see the gospel change people's lives, but you see they are struggling with a lot of different things. It's not just sin. It's just life. One pastor said I ran away because I was going to run away. He literally got in his car, asked his wife if she wanted to come with him, and she did. He just kept riding. For him, this short break has kept him to go on a little while longer for now. A lot of rabbis are afraid to talk about conflicts or voicing their opinions on topics like gun control, reproductive care, or trans rights because some get death threats if they say this or that. One Quote: 'It's a hard time to be a moral leader' (social media exacerbates the phenomenon. (Read if you have a chance) <https://www.deseret.com/faith/2022/5/11/23058739/religious-leaders-struggle-with-burnout-depression-and-anxiety-pastor-mental-health-worker-shortage>

Take time to pour your love over your pastor and first lady out of your busy day if they're approachable by text, cards, messaging, twitter, facetime, or any other method the Lord shows you, for they are under more attack than we can see. And most of all PRAY for them.

73:3 For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Asaph tells why his feet were almost gone and his steps had slipped, for he had come to allow himself to be envious at the foolish, jealous of proud people. He saw wicked people doing well. He's envious at their prosperity. He's tired of waiting for his wealth to come. When you think about this, how can you be so riled up and envious at a foolish person when God has made you wise.

- *A foolish person disregards God's Word. You want to learn or you already know God's Word.*
- *A foolish person knows it all. You're leaning and depending upon the Spirit to lead you because you don't know it all.*
- *A foolish person does not learn their lessons from the mistakes they make. Your lessons are your testimonies that overcome the devil. Proverbs 26:11 says, "As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly."*
- *A foolish person is quick tempered. You have power, love, and a sound mind (discipline and self-control). Proverbs 12:16 "A fool is quick tempered; a wise man stays cool when insulted."*
- *A person who says in his heart, "There is no God." You want to get as far away from them as possible. Proverbs 14:1a "That man is a fool who says to himself There is no God."*

Envy is a sin and destroys from the inside.

- *1 Corinthians 13:4 "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud."*
- *Proverbs 23:17-18 "Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD. There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off."*
- *Proverbs 14:30 "A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones."*
- *Proverbs 24:19 "Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked."*

The prosperity of the wicked should not be the reason for a person to slip. But, that's what Asaph sees. It is the prosperity of the wicked that he begins to be overwhelmed with doubt about God's goodness. It is him being envious in his heart at the foolish man's wealth. He begins to become envious which derails his heart and the foolish has become the stumbling block for him. It's someone else's wealth. We have to see this is outward prosperity that's temporal, and not the inward prosperity that's lasting inward for eternity.

SYNOPSIS: NOT APART OF THE LESSON—PSALM 73:4-10 — New Century Version (NCV)

4They are not suffering; they are healthy and strong. **5**They don't have troubles like the rest of us; they don't have problems like other people. **6**They wear pride like a necklace and put on violence as their clothing. **7**They are





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looking for profits and do not control their selfish desires. **8** They make fun of others and speak evil; proudly they speak of hurting others. **9** They brag to the sky. They say that they own the earth. **10** So their people turn to them and give them whatever they want. **11** They say, "How can God know? What does God Most High know?"

This is what envy will do because you have taken your eyes off of God. The wicked are going to do what they do. They can't help it, so since nothing has happened to them, they are wondering if God knew what they've done or does He have knowledge of their existing endeavors.

II. GOD'S GRIEF PSALM 73:12-13, 16-18

73:12 Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Asaph says "Look at these ungodly; wicked people— enjoying a life of ease while their riches multiply." It's a tone when you say words like that. It's hard to keep the right focus when doubt creeps in; when depression creeps in; when envy creeps in, because there's another door allowing them to come in. This means our eyes were not fixed on our source, Jesus; the eyes of our understanding were not enlightened to know the hope of our calling, and the riches of the glory of our inheritance as saints. We looked in the wrong direction and placed our eyes on the ungodly, wanting their prosperity; their riches. Our riches and their riches are in two separate places. How does God feel when we're focused on the wrong prosperity? His Spirit is grieved! Time is far spent upon the wrong thing. It's just like math, if we don't get the basic of the formulas, we will fall short of going farther. You might have to start over with the basic until you really get it. Asaph thinks that the ungodly have no trouble, but plenty of money. But that's just the opposite. More money, more trouble!

73:13 Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. Whatever Asaph has done to stay clean, pure, and innocent, he thinks it was in vain? For what good purpose was it done? Believers are to repent of sins known and unknown before coming before the Lord, for it is not in vain that we do this. It is not for show that we do this. We should feel an unrighteousness if we don't. We should feel an unworthiness if we think sin is right and we as God's children can do anything before Him and think we will slide into heaven. He will say "I never knew you, you workers of iniquity."

NOT APART OF THE LESSON—PSALM 73:14-15

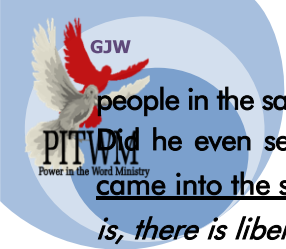
73:14 For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. Asaph is saying it starts every morning and it lasts all day long that he's been going through some crap; some stuff and being chastised and punished by it; having trouble. **73:15** If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. Asaph is facing a moral dilemma, for as he looks back to verse 13, he's saying, if he had really said that, he would have been a traitor to God's people, even a generation.

BACK TO THE LESSON: GOD'S GRIEF PSALM 73:16-18

73:16 When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me;— As Asaph meditated upon this thought he came to the conclusion that to open his mouth against the God who loved him was too painful for him. To utter his deep discouragement, he is faced with the possibility of spreading discontent among the brethren who are faithful to God. He's having a mental battle in his head.

73:17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Asaph has come to himself. You see there is the world's view and there is God's view! We can say that he had "a come to Jesus moment." This is when he understood all things clearer, for it wasn't until he went into the sanctuary, the house of God where His presence brought clarity. He's familiar with this place; the presence of God. God allowed him to get everything off his chest, out of his heart, then "Bam", truth hits him; God's presence speaks to him. You're not going to stay in a pity-party for long, and God not say anything? And it's not even going to be loud when God speaks, but when He does, you'll know it's Him. He came to the right place to hear God! I wonder did he see any of the godless rich





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people in the sanctuary? I wonder did he see any of the wicked prospering people giving their money in the sanctuary? Did he even see them giving their lives to God? NO! Therefore, all those thoughts had to fade away when he came into the sanctuary. He really understood their end and what privilege he had! "*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty!*" Can we just let God speak?

73:18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. Selfishness is a slippery slope; a slippery dangerous place to be in. *2 Timothy 3:1-2 "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy."* Asaph saw God allowing them to become rich and prosperous, therefore, if riches and prosperity are the desires that gets ahead of God, then you're in a miserable and slippery place that ends in destruction. There's a saying: '*A fool and his money is soon parted.*' The Word says in Proverbs 13:11 (NIV) "*Dishonest money dwindles away, but whoever gathers money little by little makes it grow.*" It wasn't until he went into the sanctuary of God; then he understood their end, God had surely set them in slippery (dangerous) places that makes them easy to fall and be destroyed. Asaph's eyes were opened, for he realized the ungodly who prosper has the same opportunity to change what they do with their lives and with their riches, but they love the place they're in too much.

NOT APART OF THE LESSON—PSALM 73:19-20

73:19 How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. This is not a question. This is saying "*Oh how*" they are brought into desolation! This desolation comes suddenly, in a moment. One missed paycheck; one bad financial investment; one gambling experience; one being fired from a job will wipe a lot of us out. Here the rich and prosperous are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors where they are utterly consumed; going into hell without God; wanting to commit suicide, cause money is their god! Everything we encounter is something we've walked into; led into; or under attack by the enemy that gives us a chance to call upon the only One true and glorious God. The wrong choice will lead to despair!

73:20 As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image. It seemed like a dream one is waking up from, but in reality, God arises, and He despises the image He sees.

III. GOD'S GUIDANCE PSALM 73:21-26

73:21 Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. Asaph became grieved in his heart and pricked in his reins (kidneys or metaphorically—heart) for not being appreciative of his own life. He's saying I'm sorry Lord, I have been convicted of my wrong.

73:22 So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. Asaph thought himself to be foolish and ignorant, behaving not like a natural man, but an animal thinking with his emotions, kicking against God with false conclusions and not understanding the counsel of God. He's now putting it into a better perspective.

73:23 Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Here's this "*nevertheless*" that Jesus used in the Garden of Gethsemane. "*Nevertheless, I was foolish and ignorant, I am continuous with God*"; still holding on to Him, for God has held on to Asaph by his right hand.

73:24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. God is always listening. He's always near to guide with His great counsel and will receive Asaph in glory.

73:25 Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. Is it
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something more in life to strive for than to fill our lives with envy? Yes, it's us really knowing that we are going to be received up in heaven. We have a Savior waiting for us. He went away to prepare a place for us! Asaph says "Whom have I in heaven but you?" And the excited resolve is that "There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Asaph shows us that his choice is made. God alone is to be our desire. Asaph just needed to get back to whose he was; who is standing with him, and for him—God, his true counsel! There is none other than God! When it's all over, there is none other than God! When this life ends, there is none other than God! This is who we lived our lives for and with! Desire the heavenly God so you won't wind-up in eternal damnation!

73:26 My flesh and my heart falleth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. Yes, the flesh and heart fail, but God is eternal. "God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth!" Therefore, God is available to be the strength of our heart and our portion forever! We can't even come up against the enemy with flesh. Our weapons are spiritual. Therefore, God's strength is much better than ours. So, when flesh fails, we are in Christ to get back up again.

NOT APART OF THE LESSON—PSALM 73:27-28

73:27 For, lo, that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. Those that are far from God are going to perish. God will destroy everybody that does not obey Him.

73:28 But It is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust In the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works. James 4:8a says "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you." Therefore, coming closer to God brings Him closer to us. Reach out to Him by calling His Name, reading His Word, singing praises to Him. Be intentional by setting aside time for God and getting away from distractions. Do it over and over again until it becomes your lifestyle. That's when you can say Proverbs 3:5-6 "I Trust in the Lord with all my heart and lean not unto my own understanding. In all my ways I acknowledge You Lord and You will direct my paths." Asaph is back to putting his trust in the God who he had declared as good (73:1) "that he may declare all His works." It's great to fully trust God! It's great to be able to declare all His works ²It is better to be "near to God" than to have plenty of money or things, for in a moment they will all be gone, but God will always be with us!

SUMMARY:

Asaph makes it a point to say that "Truly God is good to Israel, especially to those who are of a clean heart." Now, he's transparent about himself, explaining that his feet came so close to the edge of the cliff, that his steps were slipping, and was almost gone; he almost lost his faith. Asaph tells why his feet were almost gone and his steps had slipped, for he had come to allow himself to be envious at the foolish, jealous of proud people when he saw the prosperity of the wicked (**73:1-3**).

Asaph thinks that the ungodly have no trouble, but plenty of money. They prosper in the world and increase in riches. Whatever Asaph has done to stay clean, pure, and innocent, he thinks it was in vain? For what good purpose was it done? (**73:12-13**). As Asaph meditated upon this thought he came to the conclusion that to open his mouth against the God who loved him was too painful for him. To utter his deep discouragement, he is

² <https://www.easyenglish.bible/psalms/psalm073-089-taw.htm>
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faced with the possibility of spreading discontent among the brethren who are faithful to God. He's having a mental battle in his head. It wasn't until he went into the sanctuary of God; then he understood their end, God had surely set them in slippery (dangerous) places that makes them easy to fall and be destroyed because they love the place they're in too much (**73:16-18**).

Asaph became grieved in his heart and pricked in his reins (kidneys or metaphorically—heart) for not being appreciative of his own life. He's saying I'm sorry Lord, I have been convicted of my wrong. Asaph thought himself to be foolish and ignorant, behaving not like a natural man but an animal thinking with his emotions, kicking against God with false conclusions and not understanding the counsel of God. He's now putting it into a better perspective. Asaph says "*Nevertheless, I was foolish and ignorant, I am continuous with God*"; still holding on to Him, for God has held on to Asaph by his right hand. God is always listening. He's always near to guide with His great counsel and will receive Asaph in glory. He continues to say "*Whom have I in heaven but you?*" And the excited resolve is that "*There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.*" Asaph shows us that his choice is made. God alone is to be our desire. Yes, the flesh and heart fail, but God is eternal, therefore, God is available to be the strength of our heart and our portion forever! (**73:21-26**).