

December 30, 2022

Hi everyone, welcome to the final devotional of 2022! We're going to close the year out with a psalm. Let's turn to Psalm 73.

A Psalm of Asaph.

- [1] Truly God is good to Israel,
to those who are pure in heart.
- [2] But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled,
my steps had nearly slipped.
- [3] For I was envious of the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
- [4] For they have no pangs until death;
their bodies are fat and sleek.
- [5] They are not in trouble as others are;
they are not stricken like the rest of mankind.
- [6] Therefore pride is their necklace;
violence covers them as a garment.
- [7] Their eyes swell out through fatness;
their hearts overflow with follies.
- [8] They scoff and speak with malice;
loftily they threaten oppression.
- [9] They set their mouths against the heavens,
and their tongue struts through the earth.
- [10] Therefore his people turn back to them,
and find no fault in them.
- [11] And they say, "How can God know?
Is there knowledge in the Most High?"
- [12] Behold, these are the wicked;
always at ease, they increase in riches.
- [13] All in vain have I kept my heart clean
and washed my hands in innocence.
- [14] For all the day long I have been stricken
and rebuked every morning.
- [15] If I had said, "I will speak thus,"
I would have betrayed the generation of your children.
- [16] But when I thought how to understand this,
it seemed to me a wearisome task,
- [17] until I went into the sanctuary of God;
then I discerned their end.

[18] Truly you set them in slippery places;
you make them fall to ruin.

[19] How they are destroyed in a moment,
swept away utterly by terrors!

[20] Like a dream when one awakes,
O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms.

[21] When my soul was embittered,
when I was pricked in heart,

[22] I was brutish and ignorant;
I was like a beast toward you.

[23] Nevertheless, I am continually with you;
you hold my right hand.

[24] You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will receive me to glory.

[25] Whom have I in heaven but you?
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

[26] My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

[27] For behold, those who are far from you shall perish;
you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.

[28] But for me it is good to be near God;
I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,
that I may tell of all your works.

Think about someone in your life who seems to be more financially well off than you. Do you get envious? Think about someone who's doing well romantically and is in a happy relationship. Do you get envious? Think about someone who doesn't believe in Jesus and thus doesn't spend a chunk of time from their week devoted to church or Kingdom work, and so he or she has ample time to do other things in life to build themselves up, like studying more, or working longer hours, or acquiring a different position because of their extra free time. Do you get envious?

In life, we'll often find ourselves at the crossroads of comparison and envy. This is a sure reality, so much so that the Apostle Paul says that he has found the *secret* of contentment, not being in a place of worldly need, not needing anything else added to our lives. But isn't it true that when we compare ourselves to others, perhaps even to unbelievers, we'll often envy them and what they have.

This is exactly what the psalmist was wrestling with. This wisdom psalm helps those who sing it to rest content even when unbelievers seem to get along without a care in the world. It's easy for us, as Christians, to be tempted to join the arrogant and wicked and thus reject God. But this psalm reminds believers then and today that the path of the wicked leads to their ruin. To follow their ways and their decisions would be brutish and ignorant of us. We'd only be so nearsighted

that we think this world is it, but let's be reminded today that these different paths between the faithful and the unbelievers are not merely temporal, but eternal. Each one is going either near God or far from God, a nearness or separation that will apply both now and in the afterlife.

As we close out 2022 and start 2023, let's choose to be near God. The reality is that the tendency to compare and the temptation to envy the wicked are inevitable. So the question is not whether we will face those situations or not, but the question is...how will you respond when you find yourself comparing yourself with others? As it says in verse 23, let's choose to continually be with the LORD. He is the One who holds our right hands, who guides us with His counsel and His wisdom according to His power. Your heart and flesh may fail, but God is the strength of your heart and your portion forever.

How can you be near God? Well, according to verse 28, you can be near God by making the Lord God your refuge. I believe that means that in all situations, in all circumstances, when you compare yourself with others and are tempted to envy the wicked, turn to the Lord and remember that He is better! And when we tell others of the mighty works of our God, we're able to rest content in the supreme power of our God.

I hope and pray that this will be the reality for you today, tomorrow, and everyday throughout 2023.

Let's pray.