

Psalm 73:1-28
Is God enough for you?

Introduction: All but one of the Psalms in book 3 (73-89) are associated with the Levites. Psalm 73 summarizes the message of the entire book of Psalms. It emphasizes that blessedness is more about being assured of God's presence in them midst of difficulty than about material prosperity. This is similar to Psalm 49.

This Psalm addresses the age-old question: why should good men suffer, and bad men prosper? Doesn't this contradict God's righteousness?

He contrasts his envy with God's goodness—73:1-3

- 1) *A Psalm of Asaph.*
- 2) His conclusion—¹ *Truly God is good to Israel, to the pure of heart.*
 - a) God's goodness—Cf. Psalm 34:8; 100:5; 119:68; 135:3; 145:9; Jeremiah 33:11; Lamentations 3:25; Nahum 1:7
 - b) Pure of heart—cf. Matthew 5:8
- 3) His shame—² *But as for me my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped,*
 - a) ³ *because I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity [shalom] of the wicked/guilty.*
 - i) Cf. Psalm 37:1; Proverbs 23:17; 24:1, 19
 - ii) Does this contradict Isaiah 57:21?

He subjectively describes the prosperity [shalom] of the wicked—73:4-12

- 1) External prosperity—73:4-7
 - a) Seemingly good health—⁴ *For there are no pains in their death; their bodies are fat.*
 - b) Seemingly exempt from frailty—⁵ *They are not in trouble as other men and they are not afflicted like other people.*
 - c) Seemingly invulnerable—⁶ *Therefore pride is their necklace; a garment of violence covers them.*
 - d) Seemingly at ease—⁷ *Their eyes bulge with fatness; the imaginations of their heart overflow.*
- 2) Insolent attitudes—73:8-11
 - a) Scoffers—⁸ *They mock and speak with evil; they loftily threaten oppression.*
 - b) Self-important—⁹ *They have set their mouths in the heaven, and their tongue walks through the earth.*
 - c) Source of temptation to God's people—¹⁰ *Therefore His people (Israel) return to this place, and waters of abundance are drunk by them.*
 - d) Practical atheists—¹¹ *They say, "How does God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?"*
- 3) Summary—73:12
 - a) ¹² *Behold, these are the wicked; always being at ease, the ones always at ease increase wealth.*

His two-fold response to deceptive prosperity—73:13-17

- 1) His initial Selfward response—73:13-14
 - a) ¹³ *Truly in vain I have kept my heart pure, and washed my hands in innocence.*
 - b) ¹⁴ *And I have been afflicted all day long, and my reproof every morning.*
- 2) His delayed Godward response—73:15-17
 - a) ¹⁵ *If I had said, "I will speak out like this,"*

- i) *behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your sons.*
- ii) As a Levite, he has a responsibility of giving moral and theological guidance. Speaking his doubts would have undermined the confidence of others.
- b) ¹⁶ *But when I pondered to understand this, this was troublesome in my eyes,*
 - i) ¹⁷ *until I went into the sanctuaries of God, then I understood their end.*
 - ii) When life seems unfair, take time to worship and get your spiritual vision properly re-focused.

He displays his confidence in God's judgment of the wicked—73:18-20

- 1) The wicked lack a solid foundation—73:18 ¹⁸ *Truly in slippery places You have set them; You cause them fall to deceptions.*
- 2) The wicked will be destroyed in an instant—73:19 ¹⁹ *How they are made desolate in a moment! They are utterly swept away by terrors.*
- 3) The wicked cannot avoid the judgment of the Sovereign God whom they mockingly reject—73:20 ²⁰ *Like a dream when one awakes, O Adonai, when You awaken, You despise their image.*
 - a) Cf. the chaff of Psalm 1:4
- 4) We cannot follow the wicked into the afterlife. We cannot see what happens to them beyond the grave. Our knowledge is limited.

He acknowledges the soul-satisfying nature of God—73:21-26

- 1) His previous irrational thinking—73:21-22 ²¹ *When my heart was fermented, and I was pierced in my kidneys, ²² I was brutish and ignorant; I was like an animal before You.*
- 2) His corrected Godward thinking—73:23-26
 - a) God's supportive presence—73:23 ²³ *Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold my right hand.*
 - b) God's trustworthy counsel—73:24 ²⁴ *You guide me with Your counsel, and afterward You will receive me to glory.*
 - i) Remember Psalm 1:1 and the counsel of the ungodly
 - c) God's exclusive desirability—73:25 ²⁵ *Whom do I have in heaven but You? And I desire nothing on earth besides You.*
 - i) Cf. Psalm 16:1-11
 - d) God's eternal provision—73:26 ²⁶ *My flesh and my heart may fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*
- 3) The One whom (not what) the true believer possesses will last for eternity.

He deliberately chooses to trust God, regardless of his perceptions—73:27-28

- 1) Recognition of God's punishment for sin—73:27 ²⁷ *For behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have obliterated all those who are commit adultery toward You.*
 - a) Remember the perishing referred to in Psalm 1:6
 - b) The adultery seems to refer back to 73:10; those believers who follow in the footsteps of the wicked.
- 2) Recognition of God's presence and power—73:28 ²⁸ *But as for me the nearness of God is my good; I have made Adonai Yahweh my refuge, that I may enumerate all Your skillful works.*
 - a) This appears to echo 73:1-2.
 - b) Trust/refuge reminds us of Psalm 2:12.

A suggested prayer: Lord, bring me to the place where nothing the world offers can satisfy me as much as knowing You.

Take-home truth: God's judgment of the wicked is guaranteed, even if it is delayed.