

When Wicked Kings Prevail

Psalm 73

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, February 7, 2021

Good morning everyone and thank you for joining us for another weekend message here at Grace Fellowship Church. Thank you for joining us for another online word on our YouTube channel. I never thought I would get used to saying that. But I never thought I'd get used to saying thank you for joining us on our YouTube channel. But I do mean that it is so good to see you here with us today. And while on the one hand, we're sad that we can't meet like we would want to, on the one hand, we're sad we can't see each other face to face. On the other hand, it's a joy to be able to do this. It's a privilege to have the technology to be able to talk in this manner.

You know, if you think about it, we often complain about technology today, we often complain about things like the computer and the internet, because it's used for so many bad things. It can be used for so much evil and wickedness. But it doesn't have to be, it can be used for good. God can use it for His glory through things like this. We've all been blessed by the teaching of faithful men online. We've all been blessed by men like John MacArthur, or RC Sproul or Alistair Begg, and the ministry they give us through the world wide web. And we want to be grateful for that. It's been said, when you count your blessings, you need to count some of them twice, you need to count some of them again, and I would say the internet for Christians, when it's used in a God honoring way, has been a blessing. So, we are very grateful for that.

I also want to mention to you going along with that, that most of you have heard the recent announcement from the government saying that they are going to continue the restrictions on churches here in British Columbia. The press has used the word indefinitely. They've said that word, that they're going to extend the restrictions indefinitely. But that's not actually a word the government used in this recent announcement, if you listen to it, what they've said; not that they're not saying that the restrictions are going to go on permanently or forever; they're just saying it's open ended. They don't have a date in mind. They said it could be another month or so, maybe longer. They're just not sure about that. So, we're going to wait to see what's going to happen. If you're wondering what we're going to do as a church, we're going to wait and see what this next month is going to reveal. We're hoping that the restrictions are going to be lifted. Obviously, our prayers are that we'll be able to meet again soon. And we're asking you to pray to that end that the Lord will make that happen for us. And we'll be patient and see what will happen in the next few weeks. Which leads me to actually what I want to talk to you about this morning.

I want to just jump on into our sermon today. It leads me to what I would like to discuss with you because today we're wrapping up a series that we wouldn't be in if it were not for this crazy time. We're wrapping up a series that we wouldn't be in if it were not for the Coronavirus because it's on the Christian and the government. And that's the title of this new series. That's what it's about. We are talking about the Christian and the government because as you know, this year has been crazy for a reason. It's been tough for a reason. And that's because of the government. It's because we've had several battles with them.

In fact, you could say it this way, this year has been crazy because not only have we fought with one government over this, but we fought with several. And not only have we wrestled with one government over the Coronavirus restrictions, but we've wrestled with several ones, because as I told you before, there's 50 different states in the United States. And there's 13 provinces or territories in Canada, and all of them have come up with their own set of rules to fight the Coronavirus. All of them have come up with their own set of guidelines with how to deal with this thing. Which means that in North America alone, you have 63 different ways of handling this. On this one continent or this one part of the map, you have 63 different governments that you have to deal with, which makes things difficult to say the least. It makes things interesting, confusing, because one says one thing and one says another. One tells you to handle it this way; you know wear a mask, stay the standard six feet apart, do your services online; and another one tells you to do something else. And we could even throw in the mix here that you've got city governments to deal with as well. Some cities handle it in different ways, which is why it's important for Christians to be patient with each other right now. That's why it's important for us to be kind and generous to one another because the laws over there may not be the same as the laws over here. The laws in this part of the country may not be the same as the laws in another part, so you can't point your finger at others and say, why don't you do things the way we do? Why don't you do it like us? You've got to be more gracious than that because they may not be following the same government.

But in the midst of all this, it raises a question, it raises an issue that has to be addressed. And that is, what are we supposed to do about this? How are we supposed to respond when we don't see eye to eye with the government? I don't care what your views are in the Coronavirus. I mean, nobody sees eye to eye with the government on everything right now. It doesn't matter what your views are on the pandemic and the disease. Nobody agrees with them on everything because there's too much going on. There's just too much happening right now and changing. And so, what are we supposed to do about that? And to answer that, this morning, we're going to be talking about the problem of evil.

That's the subject we're going to look at this morning; we're going to be talking about, to end this series and wrap it up and draw to a close, we're going to talk about one more aspect of this topic. And that is the problem of evil, or the problem of evil in the government. The problem of evil in the state because the title of this sermon is When Wicked Kings Prevail, because that's what you see happening in the world today; that's what you see going on. You see wicked kings prevailing among us, you see wicked kings getting ahead. And I'm not just talking about things here in Canada, I just mean everywhere. I don't mean things here in our country, I mean things worldwide, this is a worldwide problem. It's a worldwide issue. No matter where you go, no matter where you land, no matter where you're from, there is somebody wicked in some position of power over the country. So, I want to talk to you about that this morning. We want to close our series out on that.

So far in this series, we've talked about several issues like the role of the government. And we said it's the role of the government to be an authority in our lives, an earthly authority or secular authority. The government's not an authority in the same way God is. The government's not an

authority up here in the heavens, but it is an authority on Earth. It is an authority on the ground, and we need to respect it that way and treat it that way.

We've also talked about the role of the church. We've said it's the role of the church to make disciples. Right now, that's what the church needs to be doing. It needs to be telling people about the Lord Jesus Christ. Because it's not our job to just talk about the Coronavirus all day or the pandemic or the laws and politics. It's our job to talk about Him. It's our job to focus on Him.

Last time, we talked about the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of man, that was what we talked about in the last sermon. We talked about the way that God rules the universe, because there's no sense talking about little kings when you have a big King to follow, Amen? There's no sense talking about little rulers when you've got a big Ruler in the heavens. And that's what we looked at. And we saw that God rules the earth in phases. That's how He does it. He rules in stages or steps, so that the church and the state are no longer one today. The church and the state are no longer unified, like they were in the days of Israel, in the days of the Jews. Which brings us to our sermon this morning. Because when that happens, when the church and the state are no longer unified, and they're not the same, there's a certain problem that comes up. There's a certain issue that arises, and that is that wicked kings will prevail.

Wicked kings will rise up and rule over you, it will happen. It's not a maybe, not a possibility; it will happen in this world. As sure as the turning of the earth and the rising of the sun, evil men will prevail before the Lord returns. I mean, if they did in the days of Israel, when they were a theocracy, and God was ruling over them, if wicked kings prevailed in that country, I promise you, they'll prevail in this one. It's just how it goes. You know, which is a big deal, because if you think about it, it's hard enough getting along with a government you don't agree with. It's hard enough getting along with a government that you don't see eye to eye with, but it's even harder to do it when they act like this. It's even harder to do it when they're evil. Because that compounds the problem, doesn't it? It intensifies it on every level.

It's also a big deal because it's hard enough, trusting your leaders when they take some of your freedoms away. It's hard enough trusting them when they take away some of your rights and privileges. But it's even harder when they do it while at the same time keeping the bars open. It's even harder doing it while at the same time they keep the marijuana shops and the strip clubs open and they close down the church, because that compounds that even further. Now you're scratching your head wondering what in the world is going on.

So, what are we supposed to do with that? How are we supposed to handle it? And that's what this sermon is about? If you would, to answer that, please open your Bibles to the book of Psalms. And as you're turning there to Psalm 73, I've told you before that the book of Psalms has been called God's medicine chest, or God's medicine cabinet because it tells you how to deal with pain and tells you how to how to handle it. And in Psalm 73, it tells you how to deal with a very specific type of pain. It tells you how to deal with a very specific type of problem and that's the problem of evil. And let me just read it to you before we get started, if you would, let's read all of Psalm 73, together. It says this; it's a psalm of Asaph:

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart! But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, and my steps had almost slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no pains in their death, and their body is fat. They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like mankind. Therefore, pride is their necklace; the garment of violence covers them. Their eye bulges from fatness; the imagination of their heart runs riot. They mock and wickedly speak of oppression; they speak from on high. They have set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue parades through the earth. Therefore, his people return to this place, and waters of abundance are drunk by them.

They say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge with the Most High?" Behold, these are the wicked; and always at ease, they have increased in wealth. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence; for I have been stricken all day long and chastened every morning.

If I had said, "I will speak thus," behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children. When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end.

Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors! Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form.

When my heart was embittered and I was pierced within, then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before You. Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand. With Your counsel You will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You. But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of your works.

That's a beautiful Psalm, isn't it? You can just read it and you kind of want to sing or close in prayer or just meditate on the words. But just to introduce it to you a little bit here, this subscript of this psalm says it was a psalm of Asaph, which is the second psalm that has that type of subscription in the Bible, the second psalm that's given to this man. It's the first of 11 consecutive ones that do. So, if you flip through the pages of your Bible here, from Psalm 73, all the way to Psalm 83; they all bear his name. They were all written by him, which is interesting because he's a mysterious character in the Bible. He's such an enigma; we don't know much about him. We have a few details, but not many. From what we can tell, there was an Asaph who lived in the days of King David, and he was one of David's chief musicians. He was credited with performing at the dedication of the temple, so it was probably this guy. I mean, that Asaph was certainly musical. So, it would seem to be this man. But there was also an Asaph who lived during the days of King Hezekiah. And there was another one who lived in the days of Nehemiah. He was the keeper of the king's forest; he took care of the property there. So, it could have been any of these guys, we don't really know. But whatever the case, in this psalm, Asaph writes about an issue that we would all be familiar with. He writes about a problem that we can all identify with. We've all dealt with this before. And here's the problem at the beginning of the psalm.

He says in verse one,

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart! But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, my steps that almost slipped for I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

I'm going to explain this to you in a moment; we'll walk through what it says, but what's the problem here? The problem is that he was envious of the arrogant. The problem is that Asaph saw the prosperity of the wicked and it made him mad, made him angry. He surveyed the world; he just went through his daily life and he saw that the wicked succeed while the righteous don't. He saw that the ungodly get ahead; the godless are prosperous; they do well in life, while the righteous fall flat on their face, and fail and blow it. And it made him wonder why. It made him wonder, why does God let this happen? What's going on here? What's the problem?

In fact, he asked this question several different ways in this psalm, if you want to look through some of these verses, he says, in verse four, he says, "For there are no pains in their death and their body is fat." In other words, the wicked people get to live a pain free life. They get to live a fat or an indulgent life. They have whatever they want. He says, That's not right. God, I don't like that. He says, later on, in verse five, "they are not in trouble as other men", which means now they live a trouble-free life as well. The wicked get to live a carefree life because it's so easy for them. Life is so easy. Some of you guys work with men or women who are godless, and yet they go from promotion to promotion to promotion, right? Some of you have neighbors who are godless, and yet their family looks wonderful. Everybody's healthy. Everybody's nice. They're retired, living their dreams. This is what he's talking about here. Later on, he says they are always at ease. And they have increased in wealth. So now they're getting rich, now they're getting wealthy. The money keeps rolling in; the treasures keep piling up and it makes Asaph wonder what in the world is going on?

You would think of all people, the wicked would be the last who would get this stuff. You can think, of all people on the planet, the wicked would be the last who would enjoy all of these pleasures. To put it in modern terms, it makes you wonder, why does God allow men like this to run for office? Why does God allow men like this to run for city council or city mayor or president or prime minister of the country, and win? Why does He let them win? It's one thing to let them run and fail. I mean, that's bad enough. It's one thing to let their name get out there and they don't get elected, but God lets them get elected. God lets them sit in the highest office in the land. How do you explain that? What are you supposed to think about that? That's what Asaph is wrestling with in here.

You know, as many of you know, I'm sure, we just had a presidential race in the United States. They just elected a new leader there. And being from the US, I followed it pretty closely. And it's a known fact that both of the candidates for that office were immoral men. That's a known fact; both of them had several scandals on their record, sexual scandals, political scandals. It was so bad that one European newspaper said the only loser in this election will be the American people. The only loser would be the citizens themselves, which is quite a statement. It's very sad to hear a foreign newspaper say that about the states. But I would say that is not a problem that is unique to the US. That is not a problem that's unique to that country. It's found everywhere. You have that problem

everywhere. All over the place. Several people in our church come from Africa. They come from several countries there. And they've told me that the corruption in their hometown is so bad that basic things like running water and electricity have been shut off; they've been shut down because the government has embezzled all the money. They've stolen it from those companies. And that's the sort of thing that Asaph is wrestling with here. That's the kind of problem that he's dealing with.

And I mention it because you hear a lot of people struggling with this today. We're closing out this series on this because you hear a lot of people battling with this because they say things like, I hate the government right now. You hear Christians say that. They say I can't stand it. Because it's so evil. It's so bad. I just wish they would all die. I wish they would all just fall off the face of the earth. But I want you to notice as you read this psalm, God doesn't talk like that here. God doesn't respond with that type of negative attitude. He's got some strong things to say about the wicked and we'll see that in a moment. But He doesn't say it like that.

I also mention this because some Christians don't respond like that. They don't say I hate the government right now, but instead, what they say is, well, we should just ignore all that stuff. We should just ignore all the evil as long as they give us what we want. As long as they give us our free programs and our free health care and our free pensions, it doesn't matter. I don't care. But I want you to notice the psalm doesn't say that either. The psalm doesn't say God doesn't care about evil, He does care. He cares very much.

In fact, if you look down in verse 16, there it says this, it says, "When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight, until I came into the sanctuary of God, then I perceived their end." That means that this was troublesome to me, all of these issues bothered me until I perceived that God will deal with the wicked one day. God will deal with them in the end. And Asaph said, then I was okay. When I remembered that, then I was fine. But it all goes back to Him; it all goes back to God. I have to leave this problem in His court, not in mine. I have to leave the problem of evil in the heavens where it belongs.

You know, when I was in university, I remember listening to two people argue about the existence of God in my philosophy class. And one was a Christian and one was a non-Christian, believer or non-believer argument. And the non-believers say, what about all the evil in the world? I mean, if there's a God, how do you account for that? And I'll never forget what the Christian said, because the Christian said this: he said, "My God doesn't deal with the problem of evil in this world. My God doesn't deal with all of this evil in this lifetime. He does it in the next. He does it in the next world." And my friends, he was right. He's exactly right. God will deal with the problem of evil. God will deal with all of it, all of it, in the next world. He'll deal with it in the life to come. And we need to remember that which is what we're going to talk about today.

So, if you're taking notes this morning, in Psalm 73, we're going to look at three principles for the problem of evil. That's our outline for today. That's what we're talking about. If you're taking notes in Psalm 73, we're going to look at three principles for the problem of evil. Because we want to end our series on this note. We want to end it by talking about a topic that's on everybody's mind right now. It's got to be. Why do wicked kings prevail? Why are they allowed to do this? We just said

that God is the king, God is the ruler, God is over everything. So why does the ultimate ruler allow these petty rulers to act like this? What's going on? What is God up to? You don't have to be a Christian very long to ask that question, do you? You don't have to be alive very long to ask that question. It comes up all the time.

In fact, in theological circles, this issue is known as the doctrine of theodicy. It's called the doctrine of theodicy, which refers to the study of God's relationship to evil. It comes from the word "Theos", God and "dike", trial. And it literally means to put God on trial. It means to take God to court, which is not what we're going to do today, we're not going to put God on trial, because that would not be reverent. But we do want to talk about this in a very open and honest way. And be very transparent about it. And we're going to do that by looking at three perspectives on the problem of evil. And the first one is the seriousness of the problem. The first perspective on the problem of evil that we're going to talk about today is the seriousness of the problem, which means that this problem is not a small thing to consider. It's not a minor thing. It's serious, it's a big deal. This problem should bother you. If you have a heartbeat and you have red blood, and you're alive, this problem should nag at you. Especially in a year like this, when we're seeing so many things coming down from the government that we don't understand.

So, let's talk about that. I'm not going to read verses one through 14 to you just now because we've already done that. But just to say a few words about it. And if you've read it before, you'll know that the book of Psalms is a book about worship. That's the theme of the entire book. It's a book about how to worship God. And the word Psalm in Hebrew is "mizmor", and it means a song or a melody or something that you can sing to. And so, this whole book in the Bible was devoted to that topic. If you ever wonder, does God want us to sing in church? Well, He gave you an entire book just on that topic. So yes, the answer is yes, absolutely He wants you to sing in church. He approves of that, which is why He gave us the book of Psalms and it tells you how to sing to God through the ups and downs of life. It tells you how to sing to God in the high points and the low. And this psalm discusses the low times.

This is one of those psalms that you sing from the depths. Some of the psalms you sing from the heights when life is going well and everything's the way it should be. This is a psalm on the other end of the spectrum. And the author starts off by saying, "Surely God is good to Israel". In other words, surely God is kind to us, God is merciful to those who are pure in heart. Asaph says, I know that, I get that, but here's my problem. Asaph says, here's my issue with God. He says, "But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, my steps had almost slipped for I was envious of the arrogant". His problem is that he was envious. He was jealous of arrogant men. Again, we don't know what kind of station in life Asaph had; we don't, we're not really sure on his identity. But whatever his station in life, he looked around at those around him and he noticed that bad people were rising, and good people were falling. He noticed that evil people were going up in the scales of society. And the righteous, holy, and godly people were going down. And it made him envious of them. And he goes on for the next 10 verses to describe that and tell you what he means. And for the sake of time, we won't look at all of these, but to mention a few; some that we've already looked at, verse four says, "For there are no pains in their death." I already mentioned a few words about that, but I want to say some more.

Asaph says, I was jealous about that, I was envious about that, which sounds strange to us because we read this, and we don't think anything about it because we live in a world where most people today die a pain-free death, on some level. And what I mean by that is, because we have drugs, and we have painkillers, and we have morphine. I've heard some older pastors say, it used to be on a deathbed, that's when you made things right with God, or you make things right with your family, or you make things right with those around you. Now you go to someone's deathbed and they're stoned; they're completely out of it; they're dying, pain free. It wasn't that way back then. At this time, nobody had drugs; back then, nobody had painkillers. So, everyone died a painful death. Everyone died a miserable one. Asaph says, except for the wicked; except for the ungodly. He says they don't have to die like the rest of us. They don't suffer like the rest of us. And I don't get that, God. I don't understand.

Then he says in verse four, that their body is fat, and in other words, they have enough to eat. Their cupboards are full of food. And again, we read that and that doesn't sound very strange to us, because our cupboards are full of food. We have food all around us, food everywhere. But back then people were starving. Back then, people were dying in the streets of hunger. Famine would come through the town, water would dry up, that kind of thing, and people would die. Asaph says again, except for these guys. Except for the ungodly. Verse five says, they don't experience trouble as other men. Verse 10 says, they drink waters of abundance, that means they have an abundance of everything. You name it, and they have it. You name it, and it's theirs. Verse 12 says, they are always at ease. Their life is easy. Everything comes like a cinch to them. And he wants to know why. The thing that he's asking, even though he's not always saying it in this question is, God, why are you allowing this? Why are you letting this happen? What's going on?

One commentator said this, he said this is a psalm that discusses the great concern that all the prophets have complained about. And that is that the wicked flourish in the world while the godly suffer. The godly suffer cold and hunger, the godly suffer persecution and affliction. The godly are spit upon, despised, condemned, and beaten, while the wicked are not. They don't experience any of that. Because the wicked seem to go to heaven on a bed of roses, when in the mind of Asaph, they should go to hell on a bed of thorns. And here's what this means for us. I mean, here's how you apply this to our lives today. Like I just said, some of the most wicked people in the world right now are in the halls of government, aren't they? I mean, it seems like some of the most wicked people on earth are in positions of power. And when you read this passage politics comes to mind. When you read this passage, you think about the government. And I don't even have to give you examples of this because it's just too obvious. You know that; you get this. They fit this description here.

It's been said that the brighter the light, the more flies you see around it. The brighter the light, the more bugs. And it's that way with power. It's that way with authority, which is why government draws more flies to it and draws more bugs. You guys have heard the expression absolute power corrupts absolutely. And that's the idea here.

I've had a number of people ask me recently, and you've probably heard this question before, but in light of all it's going on right now, do you think the government is persecuting the church here in Canada? I mean, do you think the government is against us? And I've said, No, I don't think it's persecuting us. Because I think we have a bigger problem. And that here, friends, I think we have a bigger issue, because I think they don't have the same values that we do. I think they don't have the same principles. So, when it comes to life, church is going that way, the government's going that way. And when push comes to shove, the church gets thrown out the window. We're just not even part of the consideration. Because we don't mean that much to them. Now to be fair, not all the government leaders are like that. To be fair, not all the leaders in government are this way. Because there are believers in government here in Canada. There are Christians in these positions of power. We thank God for them. We pray for them. We pray that they will increase; that there will be more believers who will step up into those roles but they're few and far between. As time goes on, they seem to be more and more in the minority, which puts the government at odds with us. It means that we're at cross purposes.

And if you're wondering what to do about that, and if you're wondering how to handle it, I want you to notice here that Asaph does not tell you to minimize this. He doesn't tell you to ignore this problem and shrug it off and say, it's no big deal. This whole Psalm says this is a big deal. This problem is a big issue. Because people shouldn't act this way. They shouldn't do all the things in here. He mentions several horrible things that these wicked men do in verse six, "Therefore, pride is their necklace." The idea of necklace means they wear it around, everywhere they go; pride just jumps off of them. It hits you in the face, the garment of violence covers them. The imagination of their heart runs riot, it's unchecked. There are politicians in this country and in other countries that seem to be the only agenda they have is to do wicked things. Their heart runs unchecked. They mock and wickedly speak of oppression. It goes on to say in verse 11, they say "How does God know? And is there knowledge with the Most High?" Now they're blaspheming God and making fun of Him. Asaph does not downplay this problem. And I also want you to notice that he doesn't complain about it either. I mean, he's expressing a concern here, he's expressing an issue. But he doesn't become bitter. He starts going that way, but he stops himself. We'll see that in a moment. But he doesn't become cynical. Instead, he says at the beginning here that "surely God is good to Israel". And he never backs down from that. He never wavers on that note, in fact, he finishes his psalm by saying, "But as for me, the nearness of my God is good." He begins with the goodness of God and ends with the goodness of God. It's kind of like the bookends of this psalm because he has the right outlook on this; he has the right balance, because he says yes, things are bad. Yes, things are wrong, and terrible and evil and wicked, but at the same time, God is still good in the midst of it. At the same time, God is still on the throne and gracious to His people. We need to remember that, Asaph says.

Just to put this in perspective, it's interesting we often complain about how bad our leaders are. But they're nothing compared to the leaders in Asaph's day. I mean, they don't hold a candle to these guys because these guys were truly terrible people. At least the rulers all around Israel, they were all pagans. They were all godless in every sense of the word because they worshipped idols, and they practiced bizarre rituals like cutting and human sacrifice. Some of those rulers would offer their children in fire to their gods. Can you imagine how wicked you would have to be to do that?

Kill your own kid in a fire. They were adulterous. They slept with whoever they wanted to. They were thieves. They were violent. They all had blood on their hands, every single one of them. We all remember the story of David and how he slept with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah killed. But the most unique thing about that story at that time was that he only did that one time. Everybody else all around him did it all the time. They were horrible people. They eventually influenced the kings of Israel to go that way and Asaph didn't ignore any of that. He didn't overlook any of that. But he said, Our God is still good in the midst of such horror. And we have to remember Him. You can't lose your vision of God, friends. You can't lose your view of Him in the midst of these things. The darker the night, the brighter the light, and your God is a bright light. You have to look to Him.

The story is told of the time a pastor was visiting Japan and he came across a young lady who was lost. She was a Buddhist. She practiced Buddhism. And so, he asked her, he said, you know, "Do you love the Buddha?" I just want to ask you, "Do you care for him?" And the young lady said, "You know, no, I don't actually. I believe in him, but I don't love him. I've never even thought of that." So, the pastor said, "Well, I love Jesus. And let me tell you why. Because of what He did for me; He died for me, gave His life for mine, to deal with the problem of evil in my heart, to kill it once and for all, on the cross." And friends, that's what this psalm is talking about in its own way. That's what Asaph is saying in his own time. He's not mentioning Jesus by name here. But he says that even though the world is bad, I still have a God who loves me. Even though this world is evil, I have a God who would do that kind of thing for me, and I won't forget it. I will still call on His name.

Which leads us to another point to consider this morning. It leads us to another principle for the problem of evil. The first one is the seriousness of the problem. Which means this problem is not a small thing to consider, it's not a minor thing to talk about this. This is big stuff. This is huge stuff. And you have to treat it that way. You can't say, Oh, this is not that bad; all this evil stuff, it's no big deal. This is a big deal. But God is still good in the midst of it. And that leads us to another thing to talk about, another principle for the problem of evil. And that is the solution to the problem. A second principle for the problem of evil in the passage is the solution to the problem, which means that this problem is not unanswerable. It's not impossible to solve. At first glance, you come across this issue and you think what in the world; how are we ever going to get to the bottom of this? What are we going to do? We want to wring our hands and quit and give up. But Asaph doesn't do that. He says, There's hope in this. And if you look in verse 15, he says it this way, it says,

If I had said, I will speak thus, behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children. When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight, until I came into the sanctuary of God, then I perceived their end. Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors! Like a dream when one awakens, O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form.

We will stop there. You know, as you read on in this passage, it's very moving the way Asaph says this, it's very touching. It's been said that a lot of the issues in the book of Psalms are in poetry form, because that's the best way to express them. And this is one of those, because as he goes through the problem of evil, as he continues talking about it in the poetic form, it gets worse and worse, and the problem gets worse and worse, for quite a while. It's so bad that in verse 13, he says this, right above that passage, he says, "Surely in vain, I have kept my heart pure, and wash my hands in innocence." In other words, this is all vain. All my righteousness has been vain because it's all for nothing. No matter what I do, I can't succeed. No matter how hard I try, I can't get ahead. We've all said that before. I think everybody on the planet has said that before. He says it was so bad that it chastened him every morning in verse 14, it struck him all day long. It's all he thought about. But he says this in verse 15, he says, "If I had said, I will speak thus, Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children." In other words, if I would have said this about God, I would have lied, I would have betrayed your people. So, I'm not going to do that, I'm not going to tell a lie because this is not in vain. My righteousness is not vanity. Instead, he says in verse 16, "When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight, until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end." Asaph says this is a solution to the problem of evil. This is the answer to it. I need to bring it to God. I need to take it to Him. He says it bothered me until I came into His sanctuary. It bothered me until I came into His temple. And when I did that, when I actually went into the presence of God, then it was okay because he says, "I perceived their end."

That means when I did that, when I came into God's presence, I remembered that God will deal with evil one day. I remember that God will take care of it, he says, I forgot that. Go from verse one all the way down to verse 15, or 14, he says, I didn't remember that; it totally slipped my mind. If this psalm would have ended on verse 14, by the way, it'd be the most depressing psalm in the Bible. It would rival anything you'd read in the book of Job. He says it didn't stop there; I kept going and took it to God.

In verse 18, he says, "Surely you set them in slippery places, you cast them down to destruction. How they are destroyed in a moment." That's very interesting, the way he puts this, because with the wording here, he says, you know, the wicked may move up in the world, but God will cast them down. They may succeed and get ahead and make money and have lots of friends and power and all that kind of stuff, promotion after promotion, but God will strike them down. Because the day is coming, when He'll put a stop to it. When he says, "in a moment" here, the idea is that the wicked just die in a moment, just like that. I think it was John D. Rockefeller somebody asked, how much money did he leave behind? And his lawyer or attorney said all of it, he left all of it behind. In a moment, he was dead, and it was all gone. So, Asaph says I shouldn't worry about that. I shouldn't worry about the wicked. I can leave that in God's hands. I shouldn't look at my public officials. I shouldn't look at my public leaders, my president, Prime Minister and say, why do they get to do all that? Why do they get away with it? Because they don't get away with it. Friends, do you understand that this morning? They're not getting away with anything because God will judge them for it one day. He'll hold them all accountable. You shouldn't look at them and say Just who do they think they are? I wish somebody would stop them. Somebody will stop them one day. Somebody will stop all this nonsense. And that somebody is God. He's the one who solves the problem of evil.

He's the one who deals with it. You don't. I don't. The philosophers don't. Politicians don't. God does. And He does it perfectly.

You know, we're going through the attributes of God and we're coming up to the attribute of God's omniscience and God's omniscience means He knows everything, everything. And He forgets nothing. Every evil deed that's committed on this planet will be accounted for; every single one of them. Nothing slips through the cracks of His kingdom, and nothing slips through the cracks of God's mind. He will make us answer for all of it, either at the cross, on Christ, where our sins are paid for as believers, or forever in hell.

To say it another way; one reason we get so frustrated with our leaders today is because we forget this, don't we? One reason we get so angry with them and we shout and holler and yell at the TV and say our nation is run by a bunch of idiots. It's run by a bunch of morons. The reason we talk like that is because we forget our God. We forget who He is. We're so worldly in our thinking, we get so carnal that we start thinking like, like a lost person. We only see things from down here. We only see things from this perspective when we need to be seeing things from this one. Because when you do that, you see that there's more to come. When you do that, you see that this world is not the end of the story. It's not the end of the tale, there will be a judgement day, there will be a reckoning. One day every leader will appear before the Lord, no matter who they are, great or small, and they will answer for everything they've done.

The Book of Revelation says they will be judged from the things which are written in the books, according to their deeds. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he will be thrown into the lake of fire. And that refers to everybody. If your name is not written in the Lamb's book of life, you will go to hell, you will be judged. And so, Asaph says here that you should not envy the wicked, you should not be jealous of them. Because look where they end up. Look what's going to happen to them. King for a day and damned for eternity. King for a moment and condemned forever. What's that? Do you want that?

Let me make this real applicable for us, friends. Let me say it this way. If you want to solve the problem of evil, and you want to learn how to deal with it, here's one thing you can do: you need to spend less time on your iPhones and more time in your Bible. You need to spend less time watching TV and all this stuff on the news and all the stuff about the pandemic and all this stuff about politics, government, all that stuff. And you just spend more time talking to God. You need to get your mind off all of this. And put your mind upon that. Get your mind off what's going on here and put it on what's going on up there. The Scottish pastor Robert Murray McCheyne, once said, for every look, every one look at yourself, take 10 looks at Christ. And we could say it this way, for every one look at the media, you need to take 10 looks, 20 looks, 30 looks, 40 looks at Christ. For every one look at the news, you need to take all that look at him, Jesus needs to be like a magnet to you. He needs to be like a rope that wherever you go, He pulls you back to Him.

Back to Him, back to His word, back to the Scriptures. Because that's the only thing that's going to get you through all this. That's the only thing that's going to help you survive. Don't look to the things of this world, don't look to the government; look to Him, like Asaph did.

Which leads us to one more point to consider this morning. It leads to one more principle for the problem of evil. Just to review these other ones, the first one is the seriousness of the problem. The first principle for the problem of evil that we're going to look at today is the seriousness of the problem. Which means just that, this was a serious problem for him; serious problem for all of us and for the world today. And second, we see the solution to the problem. The second principle for the problem of evil in the passage is the solution to the problem, which means this problem is not unanswerable. There is a solution. There is an answer and it's found in looking to God. In Asaph's day, it's found in coming into the sanctuary, coming into the temple. In our day we could say it's found in coming to the Scriptures, it's found in coming to church, being with God's people, praying, talking to the Lord, those things.

Which leads to one more point to consider one more principle for the problem of evil. And that is, this is a summary of it. The third principle for the problem of evil that Asaph gives us in this passage is, a summary of it. Which means that not only is there a solution to the problem of evil, but there's a conclusion as well. There is a sense of closure that he ends this song with and it's very beautiful to read in verse 21. He says,

When my heart was embittered, and I was pierced within, then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before you. Nevertheless, I am continually with You. You have taken hold of my right hand. With Your counsel, You will guide me and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on Earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You. But as for me, the nearness of God is my good. I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works.

As you read these last verses here, and this is why I read this to you, you can tell that Asaph is repeating some of the things he said earlier. He's going over some of the same ideas because he's summarizing the psalm for you. He's bringing it to a close, and he starts it off this way in verse 21. "When my heart was embittered, and I was pierced within, then I was senseless and ignorant. I was like a beast before you." In other words, as he looks back on his past experience, as he looks back on the problem of evil and how much it bothered him, he says, I became senseless over it like a beast, because I lost my mind over it. Very strong words here. But the main reason he mentions being like a beast is the idea that he lost the ability to think, it made him so mad. It made him so angry that he literally flipped out. We've all known people who've gotten this way over politics, haven't we? We've all known people that have gotten this way over things with the government. They've lost their mind; they've become like a beast. That's what Asaph did here until verse 23, says, The Lord took him by the hand, and brought him out of it. And then verse 25 says these unforgettable words, you've probably read these before; if you have, you'll remember them in verse

25, “Whom have I in heaven, but You, and besides You, I desire nothing on earth.” And you can interpret that this way: whom have I in heaven to stand up for me, and besides You, I desire nothing on earth to protect me or vindicate me or defend me when I die.

Remember, he's talking about the end of the wicked. He's talking about where they're going to end up. And he says the wicked have no one to defend them in heaven. They have no one to stand up for them there. They die and that's it. They die and it's over; they go to hell. But Asaph says, not with me. Not for me, I have someone to defend me. So, I'm going to run to Him. I'm going to think of Him, I'm going to pray to Him, I'm going to call out to Him. He says, search this whole earth and you'll never find anything as precious as God. Search this whole country and you'll never find anything better than Him.

The next verse he even says, “My flesh and my heart may fail”. Again, he's talking about death. “But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” And the word portion here, it could be translated inheritance or the thing I take with me when I die. Because the wicked don't have that either. They don't have an eternal inheritance. They die and they take nothing with them. They die and it all stays here. All the money and power and wealth just goes to somebody else. But Asaph says it's not that way with believers. It's not that way with the righteous. It's not that way with me because I have God and I can take Him with me. He's my portion forever, which means that the summary to this problem is simply this, friends, you need to look up and not down.

The conclusion to all this; the synopsis to the psalm; this whole issue is, at the end of the day, you need to look forward and not backwards. You need to keep your eyes fixed on the future. Keep your eyes fixed on eternity. Keep your eyes fixed on what lies ahead. Because listen, friends, we've not been promised success in this lifetime. We've not been promised good things. We've not been promised health and wealth and happiness. Because that comes later; that comes in the future. In this life, we've been promised trials. In this life, God has promised us tribulation and hardships and pain and a cross and a narrow way.

Listen, friends, God never promised that we would win the elections. Do you get that? Do you understand that? As Christians, God never promised that we would win all the races and all the positions of power and take over the world that way. So, you shouldn't expect that; you shouldn't put all your hopes in that. It doesn't mean you shouldn't vote. You should vote. It doesn't mean you shouldn't make good choices at the polls; you should do all that. But that's not been promised to you. So, you shouldn't be surprised when wicked kings prevail. Because this is their time, this is their world, this is their place. Yours is in the next. Your world is in the life to come. And that is where your hope is found.

It changes the whole ballgame, doesn't it? It changes the whole discussion of this problem. Our hope is in heaven. It's going to last longer anyway. And some of you have read Pilgrim's Progress before and if you have, you'll know John Bunyan wrote that from a prison cell in England. He was actually arrested for preaching the gospel without a license. He wasn't licensed with all of the state churches at the time. So, they arrested him for it, and they put him in a dark dingy prison cell; there wasn't much to it. And if you've read the Pilgrim's Progress, you'll know he writes about a

character in there called the muckraker and the muckraker was a guy who spent all his days in a dark dingy prison cell raking muck, you can see the connection there with his own life. You can see the connection there with John Bunyan. He spent all his days shoveling filth, while all the while he had a crown of gold sitting over his head. Or the whole time he had a treasure of infinite value just hanging there. And it would be his if he would just reach up and grab it. He could have the treasure if he would lift his eyes and take it. But as the story goes on, he couldn't because he couldn't look up from the muck. He couldn't take it because he couldn't stop staring at the filth.

John Bunyan says some Christians are like that today. Some believers are like that, because they have a crown of gold sitting over their heads too. They have a treasure of infinite value there. But they refuse to reach up and grab it because all they can look at is the muck around them. My friends, let me ask you, is that you this morning? Is that you today? As we've gone through this passage, as we've talked about all these things, do you have your eyes so focused on the muck, that you can't see the gold sitting over your head? Are your eyes so focused on the filth and the problems and the politics and all of that, that you can't see the treasure hanging over you? If so, let me remind you, you don't want to do that today. You don't want to make that mistake. You want to snap out of it. You want to wake up and lift up your eyes. You need to raise your eyes to all that God has in store for you and reach up and grab it. Will you do that today? Will you trust in His promises? Let me pray that you would and pray the Lord would help us to lift up our eyes.

Father, we thank you Lord, for the words that Asaph has written in this dear and precious psalm. And I feel like we could go through it all over again because we've only scratched the surface as to what he says in here. Lord, Your word is so rich. It's so deep and it's so relevant to our lives today. We don't have to make it relevant. It is relevant and meets us exactly where we are. And this is where we are today, Lord. We are wrestling with bad times. We're wrestling with times where we can't figure out what's going on. We can't see up from down, we don't know what's going on with the government. And yet You have told us in Your word right here how to deal with that. We need to bring it to You.

So, we want to do that this morning, Lord. We want to lay these things at your feet. I pray for our people here at Grace Fellowship and anyone else who's listening to the sermon, Lord, that you would use this message to lift up their eyes to You. Lord, we need to be stop being so short sighted and start being eternally sighted. We need to start thinking about forever, so to put a smile on our face again.

Thank you for Jesus who came to provide a way to heaven for us. Thank you for the Savior who came so that we would have a portion in You; we would have an inheritance. You're a God that thought of everything and left nothing out and thank you, Father for your kindness to us. Would you go with us now Lord, and help us to apply this to our lives? Help us to talk in a way with each other that's edifying and encouraging and uplifting and Christ exalting. May we change as a result of what we've heard today. I pray this in Christ's name for His glory. Amen.

Thank you for joining us for this morning. That concludes our message for today. If you would like to learn more about us, you can find us online at GraceFellowshipChilliwack.com or you can find us on our YouTube channel, just type in Grace Fellowship Chilliwack and all our material will show up there. For now, may the Lord bless you and have a wonderful day.