



## PSALM 73

God is My Strength and Portion Forever

This is Holly with Presence Point and welcome to our *Psalms for Shepherds* series. Today, we're in *Psalms 73*, the beginning of Book 3 of the Psalms - a division of the Psalter where most of the psalms deal with past or present crisis.

This song written by Asaph, one of the Levites that King David assigned as a worship leader in the tabernacle choir, according to 1 Chronicles 6. Interestingly, both he and David were skilled singers and poets, according to 2 Chronicles.

Although you may not recognize this chapter by reference, I'm sure Asaph's words will resonate with you. Whether in the church, in the business world, or in society in general, we've all seen those whose behavior is arrogant and who seem to have so much success and get away with whatever they say or do – with no consequence.

Apparently, Asaph had seen such people as well, as he outlines in this song! And it absolutely gave him, I guess, a point to ponder and he paused a bit about his behavior versus theirs. But what's wonderful about *Psalms 73* is where Asaph lands with his concern. Please join me in *Psalms 73*, subtitled, *God is My Strength and Portion Forever*.

A Psalm of Asaph.

Truly God is good to Israel,  
to those who are pure in heart.

<sup>2</sup> But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled,  
my steps had nearly slipped.

<sup>3</sup> For I was envious of the arrogant  
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

<sup>4</sup> For they have no pangs until death;  
their bodies are fat and sleek.

<sup>5</sup> They are not in trouble as others are;  
they are not stricken like the rest of mankind.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore pride is their necklace;  
violence covers them as a garment.

<sup>7</sup> Their eyes swell out through fatness;  
their hearts overflow with follies.

<sup>8</sup> They scoff and speak with malice;  
loftily they threaten oppression.  
<sup>9</sup> They set their mouths against the heavens,  
and their tongue struts through the earth.  
<sup>10</sup> Therefore his people turn back to them,  
and find no fault in them.  
<sup>11</sup> And they say, "How can God know?  
Is there knowledge in the Most High?"  
<sup>12</sup> Behold, these are the wicked;  
always at ease, they increase in riches.  
<sup>13</sup> All in vain have I kept my heart clean  
and washed my hands in innocence.  
<sup>14</sup> For all the day long I have been stricken  
and rebuked every morning.  
<sup>15</sup> If I had said, "I will speak thus,"  
I would have betrayed the generation of your children.  
<sup>16</sup> But when I thought how to understand this,  
it seemed to me a wearisome task.  
<sup>17</sup> until I went into the sanctuary of God;  
then I discerned their end.  
<sup>18</sup> Truly you set them in slippery places;  
you make them fall to ruin.  
<sup>19</sup> How they are destroyed in a moment,  
swept away utterly by terrors!  
<sup>20</sup> Like a dream when one awakes,  
O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms.  
<sup>21</sup> When my soul was embittered,  
when I was pricked in heart,  
<sup>22</sup> I was brutish and ignorant;  
I was like a beast toward you.  
<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, I am continually with you;  
you hold my right hand.  
<sup>24</sup> You guide me with your counsel,  
and afterward you will receive me to glory.  
<sup>25</sup> Whom have I in heaven but you?  
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.  
<sup>26</sup> My flesh and my heart may fail,  
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.  
<sup>27</sup> For behold, those who are far from you shall perish;  
you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.  
<sup>28</sup> 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.

I'm sure a couple of those verses that sounded familiar to you, as they are often quoted as reminders of our sure foundation.

<sup>25</sup> Whom have I in heaven but you?  
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.  
<sup>26</sup> My flesh and my heart may fail,  
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Bible Commentator Warren Wiersbe reminds us, "that the more Asaph measured his situation against that of the ungodly, the more he began to slip from his firm foundation. "Doubt comes from a struggling mind," he notes, "while unbelief comes from a stubborn will that refuses surrender to God. The unbelieving person will not believe, while the doubting person struggles to believe." In this psalm, we find Asaph, the worship leader, struggling to believe. much like all of us do from time to time if we're honest.

Unfortunately, this song shows us that Asaph initially came to a wrong conclusion; that he had been wasting his time an energy maintaining clean hands and a pure heart. But praise God, this psalm goes on to show us both Asaph's wisdom and the example we're to follow when in doubt. We are to run to the Father. Verses 16 and 17 of this psalm note that Asaph said, "But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end."

As Wiersbe reminds us, "The contrast is striking between Asaph's picture of the godly life and the godless life. The ungodly impress each other and attract admirers, but they do not have God's presence with them. The Lord upholds the righteous but casts down the wicked. The righteous are guided, Wiersbe tells us, by God's truth, but the ungodly are deluded by their own fantasies. The destiny of the true believer is glory, but the destiny of the unbeliever is destruction. The possessions of the ungodly are but idols that take the place of the Lord. Even death cannot separate us, His people, from His blessing, for the spirit goes to heaven to be with the Lord, and the body waits in the earth for resurrection.

I love Wiersbe's reminder as well as Asaph's. How encouraging this chapter is! In the midst of all that we witness in our world today, all that seems to go the opposite of what Scripture teach us, a lesson from an ancient, Asaph, reminds us that our God is our fortress, our rock, our strength, and all that we need! Now and forever into eternity.

I pray this word reassures you, dear fellow under-shepherd, that no matter what is happening on the surface around you that even if your heart and your flesh may fail, God is the strength of our hearts and our portion forever. May you live deeply into your calling this week.