



## What is Your Almost?

### Psalm 73

**Summary:** In the "almost" situations and scenarios of life, we have an adversary that attempts to derail us but praise God we have an Advocate that will protect and direct us.

**Intro:** Almost, a two-syllable word that can reflect a wide range of situations & outcomes. A word we can all relate to in various aspects of our lives. It's possible, if not probable that someone in this room almost didn't come today. There might be one person here that had an internal debate and finally said, "OK, I'll go...the worship music will probably be good for me anyway and maybe I need to hear whatever Pastor Jeff will be talking about". Only to find out Pastor Jeff isn't here, and you're stuck with me.

Don't worry though, Pastor Jeff's back next week and I'll be using the same Bible today and gratefully, the same Holy Spirit is here in our midst. Lord willing, your almost is right on time. But the word almost, it can represent something unimportant, something frustrating, or something urgent & pressing – to name only a few. Have you ever been to dinner, and everyone orders desserts – and then the desserts come out and you see the one you didn't pick (and wish you did) and say "I almost ordered that one".

Some of the men here today have probably told the same story dozens of times of how their team almost won it all – but that late flag, that dropped pass, that missed free throw. ALMOST.

As I mentioned, I used to be up here in the DC area quite a bit – and I frequently had the not-so-unique experience of ALMOST getting to the Springfield bowl where I-95 and the Beltway converge BUT I was 15 minutes too late. So for the next 90 minutes, moving 1 foot per min., I knew I'd be staring at the same rear bumper, where they went to college, they ran a ½ marathon, love the OBX... We've all been there.

Some almost moments can be the difference between life & death. We all remember where we were on 9/11. I was in Cincinnati, OH speaking @ a

downtown hotel when the twin towers were struck. I almost got stuck there as all the planes were grounded BUT I had a rental car that I drove back to Charlotte, NC.

I ended up taking a job transfer to Richmond a year later and remember seeing all the construction and repair work taking place at the Pentagon. In the days after 9/11, we heard the stories of people who were almost in one of the planes, one of the towers, or the Pentagon – but a sick child, a dead battery in their car, a rare not hearing the alarm clock and overslept – were all blessings in disguise.

Maybe you had a time where you almost took a risk and wish that you had. Almost called a friend or relative at a critical time but regret that you didn't. Common experiences that we can all relate to.

If taking notes, my title this morning: *What is Your Almost?* And from the scriptures I want to speak to those who are in Christ, and those wondering about Christ. Possibly you're here this morning, and you are almost ready to take a step backwards – you're trying to live in obedience to the Lord but your life isn't easier, in fact, it's gotten harder. And it seems the world without Christ is far more carefree.

2<sup>nd</sup> group, conceivably there's someone here this morning – perhaps a few that have heard the gospel, you've come here (or somewhere) and you've considered what the scriptures say about Jesus, sin, and the need for salvation. Maybe you've heard Pastor Jeff invite people to give their hearts and lives to Christ – and you've ALMOST done that. You've almost been convinced that you need to come to Jesus.

There are numerous “almost” scenarios that I'm not addressing this morning – but here's the great thing about the Spirit of the Living God. He'll address (specific to your individual heart) what you need to hear – and likewise, He'll multiply well beyond the three areas I prepared to speak on this morning.

But in any of the “almost” scenarios in our lives (the important ones) there will be an adversary to derail you and praise God, an Advocate to direct you; if you look to Jesus and His Word. Back to Psalm 73.

The context of Psalm 73 is that of a man that is faithfully living his life for the Lord but he notices that in his life (and others desiring to worship God with their lives) he's seeing a steady stream of difficulties, disappointments, and trials. But he looks at the lives of those ignoring God and they're living THE LIFE.

They're getting job promotions, their vacations are epic, they have season tickets to the Commanders, their kids are in the most prestigious universities, their bank accounts are growing, their health is great...

And Asaph (writer of Ps. 73) had become envious of their lives – envious of those that boasted of their success, jealous of those that seemed to not have a care in the world or any notion of God whatsoever.

And he was wondering to himself “am I just wasting my life trying to live for God?”. He almost threw in the towel – the old “if you can't beat 'em, join 'em mindset”. His attitude was causing him to doubt the promises of God, to become dissatisfied with the life God had given him through grace & forgiveness.

Maybe that's someone here today – you've begun to look longingly at a world that doesn't know Christ. They're not ready for eternity and yet you wish you had what they have – maybe not their entire life but a little more of their life and less of the one the Lord has given you. That's what the adversary seeks to do; to shift your focus from faith to frustration, from faith to feelings. From contentment to coveting.

When we remember that we're covered by the blood of Jesus and we've been granted real life in Him, it brings a contentment that's a shield to our natural flesh, that covets temporal things rather than eternal things, that come from only from the Lord. ***1 Timothy 6:6*** *Now godliness with contentment is great gain.*

Godliness (Greek means reverence & respect towards God) and Jesus is THE source of godliness in us as we abide in Him (John 15). Understand that contentment & trust go hand in hand – if we're content with what God has given to us, how He made us, the path of life He's placed us on – AND we trust Him. We trust what He's allowed in our lives to mature us. THEN we're like

the sheep in Psalm 23, lying down content and at peace. Discontent BTW, is destroying our nation. And as believers, we're not immune.

And our flesh (even after salvation) is so strong that we can be walking with the Lord and abiding in HIM and still have a lapse sound judgement as we glance towards the world, like Asaph did. And think "must be nice...". But the Lord loves us enough to protect us AND correct us. HIS sheep hear His voice.

And Asaph does indeed hear the voice of the Lord. Where & when? When he went into the sanctuary. I love this description from **Clovis Chappell** in his book "Sermons from the Psalms". *"What then did the psalmist do? The answer to some will seem perfectly childish. He went to church.... Just what others got out of this service we are not told. But the psalmist came into possession of certain gripping convictions that steadied him and enabled him to walk in the after days with firmness and assurance."*

Here's the thing, doubt your doubts, NOT the Lord. Go to church when you don't feel like it – God will speak. Open your Bible when you don't feel like it – Jesus will refresh and re-fill you. Same with prayer. Same with fellowship. If you notice discontent, covetousness, complaining, apathy, or anything in you that you KNOW is contrary to what Christ & the scriptures say. Preach to yourself & confess it to Jesus.

You have an Advocate with the Father (I John 2:1) that is infinitely greater than your adversary. He is infinitely greater than the natural affections of our flesh. **Jude 1:24** *Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless, before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.*

The Lord doesn't almost keep you – He will always keep you. **Psalm 26:1** *...I have also trusted in the Lord; I shall not slip.* The fact is, we would have already slipped and rolled backwards IF it weren't for Jesus.

And not only that, He can (and will) even give us a compassion for the souls of those that seem to be living it up, and even those despise our lives in Christ. And that's a rising tide in our land that wants less and less to do with God. Yet we can go from irritated to interceding for those deceived by Satan.

And let me speak for just a moment to some of the other burdens commonly found in the Psalms and other scriptures – but not the central focus of what

bothered Asaph. Perhaps you feel really weak. I had a visiting missionary tell me once, *"God is attracted to weakness"*. Maybe you're here or watching online and you're in chronic pain from an ongoing illness, anxious about your financial situation, troubled by a fractured relationship, or deeply discouraged about some area of unanswered prayer. And you've almost felt like giving up. I've been there. MANY saints of old have been there.

The Apostle Paul was there. He said in ***II Corinthians 1:9*** *Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.* Don't trust yourself or how you're feeling, even if you feel the shadow of death – trust the faithfulness of God. Turn your almost over to the Almighty. HE will pull you through and deepen your faith and your peace in the process. In the final chapter of Hebrews He says He will NEVER forsake us, and the God of peace will complete us. Believe it!

Want to close by speaking directly to anyone here – perhaps visiting today – that's never put their faith in Christ. Maybe you're doing really well as society would define it, maybe your not. But as the scriptures tell us, life is a vapor. It's like yesterday, I was in high school, now I'm 54 and to teens I'm old. Life is very short – but our souls will live forever. And Jesus came to save SOULS. Yours if you're willing. I made that choice 28 years ago this June. ***A.W. Tozer*** – *Faith is the gaze of a soul upon a saving God.*

Maybe you've heard the gospel a number of times. Perhaps you've come close to giving your heart to Christ on other occasions. I came close several Sundays prior to Jun 1995 before I the Lord brought me to Himself. Two millennia ago, the Apostle Paul was recounting to the Roman ruler Agrippa how Jesus had saved him on the road to Damascus (still in Syria to this day). Agrippa had all the wealth, success, and life of leisure that Asaph bemoaned in Psalm 73. But Agrippa the king said to Paul in ***Acts 26:28*** *Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."* Agrippa couldn't let go of what he possessed, to receive the salvation that only Jesus can give. For me & many others here today; our almost became an ALL-IN when we said yes to Jesus and rejected all the lies that keep us from Him.

As I close this morning, no matter what **your almost is** – give it over to Jesus, the Alpha & Omega!



## Discussion and Application Questions

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Psalm Chapter 73

**Summary:** In the "almost" situations and scenarios of life, we have an adversary that attempts to derail us but praise God we have an Advocate that will protect and direct us.

1. Have you found yourself looking at the prosperity, lifestyle, and supposed success of the world and wished your life was more like theirs?
2. Do you consciously notice those times that you're coveting the things and lives of this world?
3. What verses or passages does the Lord bring to your mind to preach truth to yourself regarding the state of the world that can look appealing?
4. What are some other "almost" scenarios that can cause believers to doubt or drift from God?
5. How did Asaph's knowledge and belief in God buoy him even as he was envious and discouraged looking at the world around him?
6. What was the turning point for Asaph? <hint, Verse 17>
7. How did Asaph's views change after he saw the final end of those without the Lord?
8. What passages can encourage us that no matter the condition of the world – even if the world hates and comes against us believers – that God will be faithful?
9. What is the conclusion to all that Asaph observed in his own heart? <hint, Verse 26, 28>