

## Psalm 73 — Practicing the Right Perspective

### Big Idea

When life seems unfair, the right perspective comes from looking to God, not looking around at others or inward at ourselves.

### Introduction: The Struggle of Perspective

In *Encounters*, we've been looking at ordinary people in Scripture whose lives were changed by a direct encounter with the presence of God. As we lean into the vision of *Coram Deo*—living before the face of God—we'll discover that God's presence is not meant to be an occasional experience, but the defining reality that shapes every part of our lives.

In Psalm 73 we see Asaph looked around him, unrighteous people seemed to prosper and the righteous were suffering? Asaph nearly “slipped” because his perspective was wrong. After an encounter with God, “steadiness” was gained and his next steps were e

Psalm 73 shows Asaph wrestling with a hard question: **Why do the wicked seem to prosper while the righteous struggle?** He is not alone. The prophet Jeremiah echoed the same sentiment in –

### Jeremiah 12:1

<sup>1</sup>Righteous *are* You, O Lord, when I plead with You; Yet let me talk with You about *Your* judgments. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? *Why* are those happy who deal so treacherously

If we were honest we have echoed the same question.

Asaph almost slipped in his faith because what he saw around him did not seem to line up with what he believed about God.

### Psalm 73:1–2, ESV

“Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped.”

### 1. An Earthly Perspective Is Slippery

#### Psalm 73:3–14

When Asaph looked at life from an earthly perspective, he became confused, angry, and discouraged.

#### A. Looking Out Made Him Mad

Asaph looked at the wicked and misunderstood what he saw.

### **1. He saw their prosperity wrongly**

They seemed to have everything they wanted.

#### **Psalm 73:3, ESV**

“For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

#### **Psalm 73:7, ESV**

“Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies.”

### **2. He saw their death wrongly**

They seemed to live comfortably and die peacefully.

#### **Psalm 73:4–5, ESV**

“For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek. They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind.”

### **3. He saw their peace wrongly**

They seemed free from trouble and worry.

#### **Psalm 73:12, ESV**

“Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches.”

### **4. He saw their pride wrongly**

They mocked God and still seemed to succeed.

#### **Psalm 73:6, ESV**

“Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment.”

#### **Psalm 73:8–9, ESV**

“They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression. They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth.”

#### **Psalm 73:11, ESV**

“And they say, ‘How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?’”

## **B. Looking In Made Him Sad**

Asaph then looked at himself and became discouraged.

### **1. He compared himself to the wicked**

He wondered if living for God had been useless.

#### **Psalm 73:13, ESV**

“All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence.”

## **2. He focused on his correction**

He felt like he suffered while the wicked got away with everything.

### **Psalm 73:14, ESV**

“For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning.”

### **Illustration**

If you count the words “them, their, and they” you will discover these words are used no less than 15 times in the first twelve verses of this Psalm. Avoid this perspective by not being lured in by lies.

Do you have the wrong perspective of the sun? If you observe the sun with your senses, it rises in the east and sets in the west. It moves right? Meet me here tomorrow morning and we will watch it come up, move across the sky and then go down behind the horizon. We know that is wrong. The earth moves around the sun. If we trust our earthly perspective, we will come to the wrong conclusion about the sun.

### **Application**

Looking out at others or looking in at ourselves can lead to the wrong perspective. An earthly perspective can make us mad and sad.

## **2. An Eternal Perspective Is Steady**

### **Psalm 73:15–28**

Asaph’s perspective changed when he looked up to God.

### **A. His Decisions Changed**

Asaph made two important decisions.

#### **1. He confessed his wrong attitude**

He admitted he had been foolish and ignorant.

### **Psalm 73:15, ESV**

“If I had said, ‘I will speak thus,’ I would have betrayed the generation of your children.”

### **Psalm 73:22, ESV**

“I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you.”

#### **2. He focused on God’s actions**

He remembered that God sees the end from the beginning.

### **Psalm 73:16–17, ESV**

“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.”

## **B. His Understanding Changed**

Asaph entered the sanctuary and began to see life from God’s perspective.

### **1. He understood the end of the wicked**

Their success was temporary, but judgment was certain.

### **Psalm 73:18–19, ESV**

“Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors!”

### **2. He trusted God as Judge**

God will deal with evil in His time and in His way.

### **Psalm 73:20, ESV**

“Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms.”

### **Psalm 73:21, ESV**

“When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart.”

Romans 14:11 & Galatians 6:7

## **Illustration**

That is why Clint Eastwood never goes out of style. It feels so good when Clint rides up and gets off his horse and says: “Go ahead punk and make my day”. This is how God should react right; solve all the worlds’ problems in a two hour movie. God is working it all out and it is all coming to his judgment throne.

## **C. His Delight Changed**

Asaph realized that God Himself was enough.

### **1. God holds him by the hand**

God’s presence is personal and sustaining.

### **Psalm 73:23, ESV**

“Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand.”

### **2. God guides him with hope**

God leads His people now and receives them into glory.

### **Psalm 73:24–25, ESV**

“You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.”

**Quote:** Everything without God is nothing, but nothing with God is everything.

- Puritan Preacher

### **3. God gives him strength and purpose**

Asaph’s joy became drawing near to God and declaring His works.

### **Psalm 73:26, ESV**

“My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

### **Psalm 73:27–28, ESV**

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

### **Application**

An eternal perspective reminds us that God is good, God is just, and God is enough.

### **Conclusion**

Asaph almost slipped, but God changed his perspective.

- Looking out made him mad.
- Looking in made him sad.
- Looking up made him glad.

The question Psalm 73 leaves us with is this:

### **Is God enough?**

When the answer is yes, we can stand firm and live Coram Deo — before the face of God.