

The Man in Psalm 73

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

Psalm 73 begins with the confident declaration that surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. And then the psalmist proceeds to tell of the struggles that he endured, in contrast to many others around him.

He revealed that had become disillusioned. His faith had nearly faltered because he envied the wicked when he saw that they had good health and strong bodies, and they were free from many of the burdens and afflictions that are common among men. Because of their prosperity and freedom from affliction, he observed that they became prideful, arrogant, callous, and conceited, speaking with malice and threatening oppression and violence.

In verse 9, the psalmist also observed that even in the midst of their evil ways, the wicked still claimed to serve God and claimed that Heaven would be their eternal destiny. They were most likely convinced that their sinful actions were indeed the right things to do. At the same time, they probably would have seen their prosperity and good fortune as evidence of God's approval of them and the things they do.

As the psalmist continued with his observations of the lives of the wicked, he wrote: "Therefore his people return to this place, and waters of abundance are drunk by them." (Psalm 73:10). Apparently when others of the world saw the prosperity of these wicked individuals and how well things were going for them, they turned to them for advice and counsel about how they managed to obtain all these benefits for themselves.

In verse 12 we see that the psalmist had concluded that the wicked always seem to be at ease and carefree, and they always seem to be getting even wealthier. In the next verse, we see that in his disillusionment he wondered what use there was in obeying God's commands, since he saw that the wicked are the ones who so often prosper.

In contrast to the prosperity and freedom from affliction that he saw in the lives of the wicked, the psalmist wrote about his troubles in verse 14, saying that he was afflicted all day long and punished every morning. He also wrote that if he had voiced the idea that it was useless to keep one's heart pure, walking in obedience to the Lord (verse 13), he "would have betrayed" God's children, causing them to stumble by speaking falsely about Him (verse 15).

Though the psalmist was at first grieved and embittered when he saw the prosperity of the wicked, God did not leave him in this state of bitter disillusionment but gave him the understanding that the prosperity of the wicked is only for a time, and their final destiny will be ruin and destruction. Beginning in verse 18, we read:

"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!" (Psalm 73:18-19)

The psalmist continued in verse 21, writing that when his heart was grieved and his spirit embittered, he was "senseless and ignorant", and "like a beast" before the Lord. This language reveals that he could have been very angry with God over the conditions of his own life, when he saw all the "good things" that were withheld from him but given to the wicked. And then beginning in verse 23 we read:

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. (Psalm 73:23-24)

In these verses we see the psalmist's confident declaration, knowing that he is one who belongs to God and knowing that His God will never leave him or forsake him, despite the afflictions and hardships He had allowed to affect his life (Deuteronomy 31:6, 8, Joshua 1:5, Hebrews 13:5). And so we see yet again the

message of eternal security that we see in many passages throughout the Bible. The psalmist knew that nothing in all creation would be able to separate him from God's love, including the times when he was grieved and embittered, and behaved "like a beast" before the Lord. (Consider Romans 8:38-39, and many others.)

Beginning in verse 25, the psalmist declares that the earth has nothing he desires besides the Lord his God. (Consider Matthew 16:24, 1 John 2:15.) He then proclaims that though his strength and his heart may fail, God is the strength of his heart and his portion forever. He writes that those who are far from God will perish, and He will destroy all who are unfaithful to Him. He concludes the psalm with the confession of a confident and steadfast faith in God, declaring that as for him, it is good to be near God; he had made the Sovereign Lord his refuge and would tell of all His deeds.

When we think of the disillusionment that the psalmist experienced when he saw the prosperity and freedom from affliction in the lives of the wicked, in contrast to the suffering and hardship that he endured, we might recall Jesus' teaching in John 16:20-22. In this passage Jesus taught us that now, during this present life, we as His people will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices. This will be our experience as we share in the sufferings of Christ, bearing fruit according to the principle that Jesus revealed in John 12:24-26.

We might also recall Jesus' pronouncement of blessings and woes in His teaching known as the Beatitudes recorded in Luke 6:20-26. Jesus pronounced woes upon those who are rich now, who are well fed now, and who laugh now, during this present life, saying that they have already received their consolation in full. At the same time, He pronounced blessings upon His people, who will be poor now, who will hunger now for the gratifications that the wicked so often enjoy, and who will weep now during this present life. Even though God's people will suffer such things, Jesus proclaimed them to be blessed by God, because their reward in Heaven will be great.

And again, when we consider the disillusionment that the psalmist suffered, we might also consider the parable of the rich man and Lazarus recorded in Luke 16:19-31. In this parable, the rich man lived in luxury every day, while the poor and afflicted Lazarus was laid at his gate to beg. The Scripture tells us that Lazarus longed to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Lazarus surely must have felt disillusioned and must have wondered why God had allowed so much affliction to touch his life. However, after both men had died, Abraham reminded the rich man, who was in hell, that during his lifetime he had received his

many “good things” while Lazarus had received his “bad things”. But now he was tormented while Lazarus was comforted there in Heaven.

Psalm 73 reminds us that we as God’s people will endure affliction and hardship during this present life. But as God’s word also reveals, the sufferings of our present lives are not worthy to be compared to the glory that will one day be revealed in us (Romans 8:17-18, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18).