

PSALMS 37 & 73

When the Wicked Prosper

AUTHORS OF THE PSALMS

- 73 psalms are attributed to David
- 11 to the Sons of Korah
- 12 to Asaph (Psalms 50, 73-83)
- 1 to Moses (Ps. 90)
- 2 to Solomon (Ps. 72 & 127)
- 1 to Ethan (Ps. 89) {aka Jeduthan}
- 1 to Heman
- 50 are anonymous (including Ps. 119)

WHO WAS ASAPH?

- He directed one of 3 groups of temple musicians descended from the three sons of Levi. They sang & played instruments.
- Heman directed the Sons of Korah.
- Asaph directed the Sons of Gershom.
- Ethan (Jeduthan) directed the Sons of Merari.
- They “prophesied with lyres, harps, & cymbals” “under the direction of the king” (1Chr. 25:1-2).

WHO WAS ASAPH?

- A Levite (1 Chr. 15:16-17, 19)
- A musician—sang, played loud cymbals
- A choir director (sons of Gershom or Asaph)
- A minister before the ark continually (1 Chr. 16:4-5, 37)
- Appointed by David (1 Chr. 16:7; 25:1-2, 6)
- Witness to physical manifestation of God’s glory at Temple dedication (2 Chr. 5:12-13)

ASAPH—AUTHOR OF PSALM 73

- Key to this Psalm hangs at the front door.
- “Surely God is good to Israel,
To those who are pure in heart!” (v.1).
- No matter how things look, God is good!
- “Pure in heart” = more than clean-minded.
- It’s being totally committed to God.
- It shows that attitude matters more than circumstances.

PSALM 73

- Movement from earthly to eternal focus
- From envy, bitterness, and confusion to joy, contentment, and understanding
- From personal peril (v.2, slipping) to personal peace (v.28, stability)
- Cause of his crisis?
- The prosperity of the wicked

THE WICKED (WHAT HE SAW, v.3)

- Proud (3, 6)
- Prosperous (3)
- Without Pain (4)
- Sound & Sleek Bodies (4)
- No Troubles or Afflictions (5)
- Violent (6)
- No Restraint, Wasteful, Extravagant (7)

THE WICKED (WHAT HE SAW, v.3)

- Arrogant mocking & oppression (8)
- Mocking of God (9)
- Self-promotion (9)
- Leading others astray (10)
- Questioning God’s knowledge (11)
- At ease & increasing in wealth (12)

HIS RESPONSE TO WHAT HE SAW

- Envy (3)
- Questioning of his choice to stay pure (13):
“What good has it done me?”
- Despairing as he faces daily pain (14)
- He’s “close to stumbling” or slipping spiritually (2).

HIS CONSCIENCE AWAKES

- Awareness of his obligation to and influence on others in God’s family (15)
- Honest admission that he can’t understand the situation on his own (16)
- Note: God knows our thoughts. We might as well be honest with Him.

HE SEES WITH FRESH EYES

- Entering God’s presence changes everything—transforms his outlook (17).
- He experiences a moral turn from focus on self in comparison to the wicked (3, 13-14) to focus on others (15) to focus on God (17 ff.).
- **HE TAKES GOD’S VIEW.**

HE SEES WITH FRESH EYES

- He sees how the wicked will end (17-20, 27).
- He sees himself clearly as having been “embittered” (21), “senseless, ignorant,” and “like a beast” (22).
- He realizes he is always with God, Who has never moved away from Him (23), even though he “almost slipped” (2).

HE SEES WITH FRESH EYES

- God
 - Has Grasped him (23)
 - Will Guide him (24)
 - Will Glorify him (24)
- Having God, he desires nothing on earth (25).
- God is his strength & his portion forever (26).

PSALM 73

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HE SEES WITH FRESH EYES

- Should I be “envious of the arrogant”? (v.3)
 - No! They are doomed (27).
- Was my godliness all in vain? (13)
 - No! I possess the chief and only good, which is to be near God (28).
- Am I likely to harm others with my words? (15)
 - Not now! I get to “tell of all [God’s] works” (28).

Psalm 73:1

*Surely God is good to
Israel, To those who are
pure in heart!*

PSALM 37

- Do not fret because of evildoers (1, 7, 8).
- Instead, trust the Lord (3, 5); do good (3, 27); cultivate faithfulness (3); delight in the Lord (4); commit your way to Him (5); rest in Him (7); wait patiently for Him (7, 34); stop being angry (8); depart from evil (27); keep His way (34).

HOW TO DELIGHT IN THE LORD

- To Delight is to enjoy, have great pleasure.
- Know Him personally.
- Know what He's like—need to read His Word, spend time with Him in prayer.
- Be thankful & in awe of Him.
- Obey Him.
- Praise Him.

GENERAL PRINCIPLE

- After a lifetime of observing God's care for the righteous, David declared that God doesn't forsake them or fail to provide for them (Ps. 37:25).
- As Psalm 73 indicates, the righteous may experience difficulties: (1) Trials for their growth, (2) To bring glory to God, (3) To be an example to others, (4) Chastisement, etc., but God won't ever forsake us!

LESSONS FROM PSALM 37

- The wicked won't last (Ps.37:2, 9, 10, 13, 15, 17, 20, 22, 28, 34, 36, 38).
- God will provide for and protect the righteous (Ps.37:3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 37, 39, 40).
- It's better to be poor & righteous than wealthy & wicked (16).

LESSONS FROM PSALM 37

- Instead of fretting or envying the wicked, look ahead (v.2) to their future and look up (v.3 ff.) to God. (Cf. Ps. 73.)
- The Lord holds the hand of his beloved and keeps him from being overwhelmed if he does fall (24). (Cf. Ps. 73.)
- God guides our steps (23) and helps us not to slip (31). (Cf. Ps. 73.)

COMPASSION FOR THE WICKED

- Everyone of us was once in the category of the *wicked*.
- Only by God's grace can we now be called *righteous*.
- Sometimes people aren't doing as well as they appear to be. (Cf. "Richard Cory.")
- Let's pray for the salvation of the lost. Jesus died for them just as he did for us.