

Why Do I Always Draw the Short Straw? (Psalm 73)

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[0 : 00] So I'll be reading from the NIV, but please follow along in your own translations. This is the word of the Lord. A Psalm of Asaph.

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost slipped.

I nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles. Their bodies, they are healthy and strong.

They are free from common human burdens. They're not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace. They clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity.

Their evil imaginations have no limits. They scoff and speak of malice. With arrogance they threaten oppression. Their mouths lay claim to heaven.

[1 : 03] And their tongues take possession of the earth. Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. They say, how would God know?

Does the Most High know anything? This is what the wicked are like. Always free of care. They go on amassing wealth.

Surely in vain I've kept my heart pure. And have washed my hands in innocence. All day long I've been afflicted. And every morning brings new punishments.

If I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed your children. When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply.

Until I entered the sanctuary of God. Then I understood their final destiny. Surely you placed them on slippery ground.

[2 : 02] You cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed. Completely swept away by terrors. They are like a dream when one awakes. When you arise, Lord, you will despise them as fantasies.

When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant. I was a brute beast before you.

Yet I'm always with you. You hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel. And afterwards you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you?

And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail. But God is a strength of my heart. And my portion forever.

Those who are far from you will perish. You destroy all who are unfaithful to you. But as for me, it is good to be near God. I've made the sovereign Lord my refuge.

[3 : 08] I will tell of all of your deeds. This is God's word. God has nothing I desire other people.

What I desire to do in the south city is God's word to you. That's a very Landing by the unseren Roifen. And there we go. Don't fail me. I'm sorry. There we go. Yeah, thank you for having me here. And I understand that over the last month, from the beginning of the year, you guys have been going through a series called Wisdom for the Heart. Isn't that a wonderful series to kick off the year with?

Yeah, because, you know, one thing I've realized is, as I've grown older, as I get older, I realize the older we get, the more prone we are to having heart problems. And I don't just mean the, you know, physiological kind of heart problems like heart attacks and, you know, strokes.

I mean, you know, the emotional kind, the kind that doctors can't always fix. But let me tell you about a heart problem that I've always had, and maybe you can relate with.

When I was a kid, I remember one of the things I really struggled with, okay, is kind of, I'll just give you an illustration. I used to love action figures. I love Dragon Ball Z. And so I love to collect Dragon Ball Z action figures.

[4 : 30] And one day I got this Goku action figure. I don't know if you know Dragon Ball Z, but Goku's one of the main characters. Yeah, I got this action figure. It doesn't move, but it looks pretty cool. I'm like, this is so cool.

I took it everywhere with me. But you know what? One day I saw one of my friends, you know, the richer kid, and he got a better action figure. He got a better Goku. His Goku actually moved. Arms and leg and everything can do the Kamehameha.

And I was like, I looked at my Goku, and I'm like, you're dead to me. I don't know if you know that feeling. Do you have a name for it? It's called envy, isn't it?

It's the feeling that, it's the bitterness inside you that goes, I need to have the best. Why does that guy have something better than I have? Why don't I have what they have?

In fact, I hated that they have what I don't have. That is a funny thing, you see. Sometimes as kids we feel this way, but growing up, you start to, this kind of envy kind of follows you around.

[5 : 35] And now I'm dealing with envy not of toys, but of, oh, they have a nicer house. Oh, that guy has a really comfortable, they get to go on nice holidays. Why don't I get to go on nice holidays?

And it kind of, this just, your toys just get bigger. Your desires and your wants just get bigger and bigger and bigger. Until nothing in the world can satisfy you.

So envy, my friends, is not, I'm guessing you guys can relate. You can think of examples in your own life where you've felt envy before.

Well, it's not a recent problem because from what we understand, even in the Bible, from the very beginning pages of the Bible, it's a problem that's been around for as long as mankind.

We hear about it ever since the Cain and Abel story. You remember how Cain murdered his brother Abel because he was envious of him. Why does God accept Abel's sacrifice?

[6 : 35] So today what we're going to do is we're going to look at the psalm. Psalm 1073 is one of my favorites. It might be yours as well. We're going to look at this guy named Asaph and how he dealt with the problem of envy 3,000 years ago.

But before we do that, let's start with a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, we acknowledge that, yeah, we're broken sinners and we struggle with so many heart problems, Lord.

And one of the problems we have is that we just constantly want more. We're constantly not satisfied and we're envious of others. Lord, as we look into your word today, we pray that your spirit will work in our hearts.

Both hearers and the speaker here, we all need you to work in our hearts, do a deep work in our hearts. Help us to see that we have something so much better in you.

Thank you and we pray this in your son's name. Amen. Well, I'd like you, if you have a paper Bible, to follow along with me because we'll be walking through the whole psalm together.

[7 : 44] Otherwise, there will be slides that sort of track along as I talk. So, as we look at the very start of Psalm 73, the very first verse, verse 0, tells us that this is a psalm of Asaph.

Yeah, that is actually in the original languages, so don't ever miss that. It is a psalm of Asaph. And who is Asaph? Asaph is a worship leader. He's a songwriter.

He loves to lead the people of God, the Israelites, to worship God. And we know that he authored 11 of the psalms in the Bible. So, you can have a search up of all the other ones later on today.

And what we know at the start of the psalm is that Asaph starts in a very good place, right? He's like, I trust the God. God is good. I'm going to keep my heart pure, and it's going to be good.

So, he starts in a good place. And you might be able to relate with that. But then really quickly, straight into it, from verse 2, we're told that his feet almost slipped. He almost lost his way.

[8 : 51] Now, how did he do that? Let's keep going. From verse 3 to 5, we realize that the reason that his feet nearly slipped is because he saw that there were some people in the world, and these people are not very nice people.

They're very wicked people, but they get to have life easy. They don't go through struggles in life. They don't get miscarriages. They don't have fights with cancer.

Their pipes never burst. Their cars never break. Their houses don't even get flooded when there's a big event like this. Life seems to go smooth for them.

So, Asaph's like, why did they get up so easy? So, Asaph is envious of them. Verse 6 to 8 tells us that these wicked people, they're arrogant, they're violent, they're malicious, they oppress others.

Their hearts are callous, and there's no end to their evil imaginations. They keep thinking of, oh, how can I rip off the next guy, or how can I exploit this person? They're keeping on thinking of what more can they do to gain for themselves.

[10 : 00] But not only that, you see. Not only do they do a hard and bitter work on people, but they set their mouths against heaven.

Look with me in verse 9 to 11. We see that they dare to mock God. They boast against God, going, he doesn't know. He can't see. He's not going to do anything.

So, the question is, why hasn't God struck them down with lightning already? Not only do they seem to escape justice. Verse 12 tells us that these people, these wicked people, they keep increasing in wealth.

Everything they touch turns to gold. Prosperity seems to follow them wherever they go. I don't know if you can think of a person like that. I certainly can think of a few. Verse 13, we see Asaph's true anger, you could say.

He's like, what's the point? What's the point of keeping my heart so pure and following God if I always draw the short straw? Why do I always draw the short straw in life?

[11 : 04] I don't know if you can feel Asaph's frustration right now. See, Asaph isn't just frustrated at the wicked.

Asaph's frustration is made more complex because it's actually very theologically charged. Because I don't know if you know the very first psalm in the book of Psalms.

Psalm 1, what does it tell us? It doesn't tell us that the wicked are the ones that are blessed, right? Who are the blessed? The blessed, let's have a look at the first psalm. The blessed are the ones who delight in the law of the Lord.

They meditate on the law of the Lord day and night. That kind of a person is like a tree planted by the streams, bearing fruit in all of its seasons.

And whatever that person does, prospers. So what Psalm 1 tells us, it gives us a theology which says that the prosperity belongs to the righteous, not to the wicked.

[12 : 10] So my question that I want you to think about today with me is, why doesn't that line up with reality? See, Asaph is conflicted.

He knows that God's word promised that there will be blessing and prosperity for the one who trusts in God and follows God, is devoted to God. But then in reality, he sees the blessed are the ones who disobey God, reject God, mock God.

Asaph doesn't just have a beef with the wicked, he has a beef with God. He's bitter at God. He's like, I've been on good behavior.

Why don't I get blessed? See, before I met my lovely wife, Kim, who's back there with our baby son, I was actually a very miserable failure when it came to relationships.

I had a string of really unsuccessful relationships, you could call it. And as in a time when I was grieving my singleness and why I'm so bad at dating and relationships, a good friend of mine, he's never dated.

[13 : 18] And, you know, there's this guy, 27 years old. He's never dated, single all his life, and he starts dating for the first time. So I was like, oh, you know what, brother, I'll help you out. I'll give you some tips, at least what not to do, because, you know, I've got more experience than you.

But you know what happened? This friend of mine, three months later, after starting dating, he gets engaged. Eight months later, he gets married. I was like, good for you, brother.

But inside, I was like, are you serious? Are you kidding me? Now, I don't want you to think wrong of this brother of mine. Actually, he's a really good friend of mine.

Actually, William knows him. We were both at his wedding. We do love him. He's a good brother. He's not a wicked person. I don't want you to get misled. But I did have that envy in my heart.

I was like, why, God, was I not devout enough? Yeah, sure, he's a pretty good Christian, but I'm a pretty good Christian too, right? And so some of you here sitting, you might be thinking, oh, Michael, you just had bad luck.

[14 : 19] You know, like your friend, he had really good luck. But you see, as Christians, we shouldn't believe in luck. It's not chance that's rolling out the dice every single time.

It's not chance that's dealing out the hand to us, right? We believe in God's providence. We believe that God is in control of all things, even the flood situation right now. But see, this is the thing.

When you do believe in God's sovereignty, when you do believe that God is in control of all things, sometimes it can hurt just a little bit more, doesn't it? When you think, hey, it's not just random chance that's dealing this out to me, but it's my heavenly Father.

Why is he doing this to me? Why is he dishing out the short straw to me? So I don't know if you've ever felt that. Have you, maybe you're one of the people who, you know, very devoted at church, loves God, but there's something that you, maybe a constant prayer in your life, you're like, God, give this to me.

Why won't you give it to me? Why do you give it to everyone else? Do I not love you enough? What's the point of being so faithful? Have I always drawn the short straw?

[15 : 33] I don't know if you've ever asked those questions before. I don't know if you ever feel like it's God who's failed you. It's at this point, when we deal with suffering and the questions of hardship and unfairness, injustice that many people, many Christians do end up walking away from the faith altogether.

They're like, nah, not for me. This Jesus thing, not for me. But I want to encourage you, let's keep reading in the story of Asaph. Let's see how he dealt with this problem of envy and injustice and how he wrestled with God.

Let's go to verse 16 to 17 of the psalm. Asaph says this, he says, Now, that's a very good rule of thumb.

When your heart is troubled deeply, go to church. Now, first of all, Asaph didn't go to church as we know it. Asaph went to God's sanctuary.

And what God's sanctuary is back in the day, if you lived in the Old Testament Israel times, the sanctuary is God's temple. It's the temple that's in Jerusalem where every Jew have to go and to worship God and offer sacrifices.

[16 : 52] And it's at this temple that he comes to, Asaph comes to see three things that changed his perspective on life. And I hope that these three things help you change your perspective as well.

The first thing he sees is the destiny of the wicked. Let's read on from verse 18 to 19. Asaph says, Surely you place them on slippery ground.

You cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed? Completely swept away by terrorists. So you see, Asaph looks, goes into the temple.

He sees the destiny of the wicked. And that destiny of the wicked is to meet God's judgment. Judgment from God will come upon them suddenly and without warning.

This kind of, it so suits the time of what we're going through right now, doesn't it? As we go through this time where so many people are affected by this flood.

[17 : 53] I don't know if you've kind of been reminded of Noah's flood. I certainly was. Were you shocked just on Friday night, just how quickly that rain came and there was like no warning?

Right? And like many ways, like there's some complaints made about how our mayor did not act fast enough to give us that warning. And in the same way, you see, Jesus talked about Noah's flood in the same way.

He said, in the days of Noah, there were people eating, drinking, marrying, going to concerts. Until Noah went into the ark, the flood came and they were all destroyed.

And what Jesus means is this. He says, look to Noah's ark. And today, for us to look at the flood in Auckland. And let that be both reminders for us that the day of the Lord will come upon us like a thief.

Jesus says, it will come upon you when you least expect it. One moment, you're enjoying life. Next moment, you're face to face with your maker. Friends, are you ready for that?

[18 : 59] Now, it's a scary thing if you are a wicked person. Now, you might say, well, I'm so glad I am not a wicked person. I'm a good person. You know, I obey my parents.

I'm generally pretty polite. See, this is where the Bible really challenges our thinking, doesn't it? We think that the wicked people are just the worst of the worst.

You know, the rapists, the murderers, the people who, yeah, like abort babies, maybe. But, see, the Bible has a much broader definition of the wicked than we do.

The Bible doesn't define wicked as just the worst of the worst. The Bible defines wicked people as anyone who lives their life rejecting God, disregarding God, and ignoring God.

See, Jesus once told a story that illustrates this so well. And it's in Luke. We won't need to go there, but I'll tell you the story. He tells of this man who had a lot of land.

[20 : 01] He's a very rich man, okay, lots of real estate. And his land was so productive. And he's got this overabundance of crops, basically his just super prosperity.

And so you see, okay, this guy, lots of land, lots of crops, lots of money. What does he end up doing? Well, he gives it away, right? Yeah, right.

No, he does not give it away. No, he stores it up, you know, for the next year. And for the year after that, and the year after that, and 10 years down the road. And his thinking is this. Well, I've made it.

Because, you know, I've got so much crops. I've got so much money. I can retire early now. I'm sorted for life. Right? So far, so good, right?

That's almost what most of us want. But what did God say to this man? God says, you fool. This very night, I will take everything from you, including your very life.

[21 : 04] Now, you might hear that and say, God sounds really scary. And, you know, it is a scary thing to live your whole life ignoring God, disregarding him, thinking I can put him off.

He's not important. He's not in the urgent category. I don't need to deal with him right now. Maybe I'll turn to Jesus before I die. Friends, it's a scary thing to live your whole life rejecting God, ignoring God, and to suddenly meet him in judgment.

Because at that point, there will be no more mercy. But right now is the hour of mercy. It's the day of salvation. Jesus is holding out his grace and his mercy, offering forgiveness to us, right?

Every new day we get is a day of the Lord's favor. It's the day of God extending his patience towards us, saying, come home. Why will you die?

I do not delight in the death of the wicked. So the invitation is out to us, even today, that we turn to Jesus. We trust in God. Because if you ignore God now, you will have to face him in judgment.

[22 : 13] But if you seek him now, you will find him in mercy. So friends, I want to plead with you. If you don't know Jesus, don't be like the rich fool. Don't put off dealing with God.

Seek Jesus today. So at the sanctuary, at the temple, Asaph first sees the destiny of the wicked. And the destiny of the wicked is to face God's judgment.

They're not going to escape with all their sins and wickedness. The second thing he sees, he actually looks into the mirror and he sees himself.

He examines himself. Read with me, starting at verse 21 to 22. When my heart was grieved, my spirit was embittered.

I was senseless and ignorant. I was a brute beast before you. See, Asaph confesses that he's been bitter at God. And now he says something interesting.

[23 : 13] He says that I was like a beast toward you. Now, isn't that an interesting thing to say? Because, you see, the culture around us, especially in our 21st century where we're very modern and we're very scientific and we got rid of God, we don't need God anymore.

The culture around us liked us to think that we're just animals. We're no different from the animals. We're just another iteration on the evolutionary process, right? You're not much different than a monkey.

They like this thing. They like you to believe. But see, the Bible gives us a very different paradigm. The Bible holds out that we are not like animals. Ever since the very beginning pages of the Bible, we're told that we are made in God's image.

We're not made in some animal or some monkey's image. We are made to worship God. Whereas animals, they only know how to feed their stomach. See, there's an excellent book that's titled this.

It's titled, We Become What We Worship. And it kind of explores the theme of worship and idolatry through the whole Bible. And basic thesis of this book is this.

- [24 : 22] It says that if we worship God, if we worship the God Almighty, we will become like Him. We will resemble His likeness. But if we worship idols, idols made of clay, of rock, of wood, we become like those idols.
- We'll become dumb. We won't move. We'll be dead like those idols are. We'll become like a stubborn mule. Like a stubborn calf.
- See, the story of the Old Testament Israel is that through the whole history of Israel, Israel kept worshiping idols, right? They started off by worshiping this golden calf as they came out of Egypt.
- But you see, that's not the only time when they worshiped the calf. Later on, as the kingdoms after David and Solomon split, you may know about the northern and southern kingdom, the northern kingdom of Israel started worshiping idols again.
- And precisely this calf, they had two calves, one up the north and one up down the south. They're like, here are your gods, oh Israel. Now, I wonder if you ever thought, why do these people keep worshiping the calf?
- [25 : 33] Why don't they learn their lesson? Well, you see, it's because their wealth came from livestock. That's the source of their wealth.
- So in some ways, as they worshiped the calf, they were worshiping wealth, money, prosperity. In some ways, they're not that much different than we are.
- We just think we're more sophisticated than them, that's all. So Asaph, he looks into the mirror and he examines himself. And what he sees is, he sees a calf staring back at him.
- As he looks into this mirror, he sees his own beastliness. And so he confesses that, God, I've not been like a man. I've not worshipped you like a man should.
- I've been like a calf. I've been like a beast. I've been stupid because my eyes have been set on prosperity and gain and wealth and riches. My heart has been far from you.
- [26 : 37] Asaph sees that even though he thought he was the righteous man from Psalm 1 or along, he's far from the righteous man. He is nowhere near righteous.
- He's been envying the wicked. He's got the same idols as the wicked does. His envy has revealed his idols.
- So my friends, I want to ask whether the envy in your life has started to show the idols in your life. Do you find yourself envying another person's life because they seem to have it all?
- Maybe that you envy their dream job. They seem to always have the better pay. They get the better opportunities. Maybe you envy the house they get to live in. They get to live in Remiera where you're down south in Otara.
- Maybe you're envying their holidays. I know I sometimes really wish I could go overseas on a holiday, but it makes it hard when you're on a ministry budget. And so it's easy for us, myself included, to really idolize these things, these good things that become ultimate things which became gods.
- [27 : 53] I think the danger facing many of us Christians is not that all of a sudden one day we'll turn off the switch and decide we no longer become Christians and just walk out on Jesus.
- I think the danger is that idolatry slowly seeps into our lives. It takes us time over years and decades to do a work and entangle our hearts until we no longer are committed to Jesus, until before we realize that Jesus is just something periphery on our lives, whereas our core commitment is to money, to chasing prosperity, to chasing gain, to chasing success.
- It's so easy for us to justify to ourselves because it's not a sin to just have a nicer house. It's not a sin to drive a flashier car, right? It's okay to have a little more, and they have a little more, and they have a little more.

Friends, we need to really heed the warning of Paul. When he speaks to the Philippian Christians, he writes this in Philippians chapter 3. He says, So Paul writes with tears to these Christians that he loves, this church that he loves so dearly.

He says, There are some people, there are some Christians who call themselves Christians, yet their mind is completely fixated on earthly things. Their stomach is their God.

[29 : 49] They only know to feed their appetites like animals. They only know to look down on the ground. They don't know to look up towards God. Their destiny is destruction, he says.

Now, I wonder if Paul even had Psalm 73 in mind. See, I think the difference between humans and animals is kind of, you can really say that it's the difference in our orientation of our eyes.

It's what we set our eyes on. Jesus kind of talks about this in Matthew as well, is that the eyes and the heart are so linked together. You know, where our treasures are, there will be our heart also.

But if our eye is good, our whole body is good. If our eye is bad, our body is bad. So I want to ask you, are you behaving like a human looking towards God, looking up towards the one that you're eagerly awaiting?

Because that's where your citizenship is. Or are you behaving like an animal, like a beast, setting your eyes on the ground and you only know how to chew, look for grass to feed your stomach?

[30 : 59] Friends, that may sound very challenging, and I know it sounds challenging to myself as I say this, is that often I feel like I am like Asaph, behaving like a beast towards God. Because as much as I know intellectually that God is my treasure, sometimes I'm just too fixated on the things on the ground.

So we see that Asaph has first seen the destiny of the wicked, destruction is awaiting them. Then he's seen his own beastliness as he looks into the mirror and he sees that he's deserving of the same judgment.

Lastly, let's see what he sees next. He looks towards God. And as he looks towards God, we approach perhaps what is the most comforting word in this whole psalm.

It's that three-letter word called yet, in verse 23. Let's read from verse 22. What beautiful words.

Asaph has seen the destiny of the wicked is to be destroyed. He's seen his own sin that he deserves punishment because he's not a righteous man. But yet, somehow, God does not send Asaph to the same destiny as the wicked.

[32 : 32] God holds on to him. God carries him and will take him into glory. Now you might ask, how exactly did Asaph come to know that God would be gracious to him?

See, to answer that question, we've got to ponder again at the turning point in Asaph's story. It's in verse 17, right? When we read that he was, you know, troubled deeply till he entered God's sanctuary.

It's when he went into the temple, everything changed. Now, what exactly happened at the temple that changed his attitude? Like, we can make guesses here because he doesn't really tell us.

Like, you could think, hey, maybe something really supernatural happened. God spoke to him in a dream or a vision. A blinding light came upon him and he was like, oh, I see. Maybe? But because Asaph doesn't say anything like that, it doesn't describe any supernatural encounters, I'm more inclined to think that actually it's nothing supernatural.

It's actually something very ordinary. I think he saw something that every person would have seen if you walk into the temple at that time. See, I should have put a picture of the temple up, but you might know that when you enter the temple, the Old Testament Jerusalem temple, the first thing you see is the altar.

[33 : 50] The altar of sacrifice. The altar of sacrifice. As you enter the temple, the first thing that would have captured your attention was animals being slaughtered on this altar of sacrifice.

You would have seen lambs and goats, their throats being slit. the blood drain away and their bodies becoming lifeless and they're chucked into this altar, burned up.

And when you see that, what it's supposed to remind you of is that, A, first, the penalty of sin is death. Asaph sees that these animals being killed and he realizes that he himself is like an animal that deserves to be slaughtered.

he has sinned against God. But not only do these sacrifices remind us that the penalty of sin is death, it also reminds us that God is so gracious.

He has provided a way for us to be forgiven, for us to be accepted before him. Even though we are so sinful, even though we are so guilty, by God's grace, another animal dies in Asaph's place so that he can have a relationship with God that's completely based on grace.

[35 : 03] It's not because of his good behavior. It's not because he's been so devout and pure in heart. His relationship with God is completely by grace. So that's what you had to do back then.

If you sinned, you've got to go to the temple, offer a sacrifice, and then you're kind of in a good place with God. But today, as New Testament Christians, we have something so much better, don't we?

Infinitely better. We don't have to sacrifice animals anymore. You might have noticed we don't have a lamb here. Jesus, he paid the ultimate price.

He was the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. You see, in the book of Hebrews, the writer of the Hebrews tells us actually all the animals that were sacrificed in the Old Testament times, none of them really took away sin.

Because no animal can pay for the price of human sin. It really took nothing less than the death of the Son of God to really pay for the travesty that we have all done.

[36 : 09] It really took Jesus to die on the cross so that we can be forgiven and be made right with God. Friends, I don't know if you realize now, we've been talking a little bit about the Psalm 1 person who's righteous.

who loves the law of the Lord, who seems to always prosper and everything he does is fruitful. You want to be that guy, right? Do you realize that there's only really one person who fits that model?

And it's our Lord Jesus. Jesus alone is the righteous man who loved God truly, who worshipped him truly, who was devout to his words. He alone was worthy of all the blessedness, all the prosperity.

Yet for our sakes, he emptied himself. He poured out his life so that you and I, we can be made righteous before God, so we can have a relationship with God, so that we can have a relationship with God that's completely based on grace.

Isn't it just the greatest comfort that, look, as Christians, we're not just saved by grace when we were initially saved and became a Christian. No, it's actually every day as we walk as a Christian from the day we are saved to the day we enter God's glory.

[37 : 23] It's God's grace that's carrying us the whole entire way, holding on to us, guiding us. God's grace that's taking us from beastliness all the way to glory.

That's the journey that you and I are on. Isn't it a glorious journey? So we've seen that Asaph, he sees the destiny of the wicked.

He sees that he's deserving of the same destiny, but he's confident that God will not let him go. God will not send him to judgment and to destruction. So what is this glorious destiny that God has in store for Asaph and for all the faithful?

Let's have a look, starting in verse 25. Verse 25 and 26, Asaph says this, Whom do I have in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. So do you see the journey that Asaph's been on?

[38 : 30] He started out by eyeing the prosperity of the wicked and he's so envious of them. And his inner turmoil drove him to the temple and he saw the destiny awaiting the wicked, judgment.

And he saw his own sinfulness, that he's been idolizing money and riches and prosperity. And now he finally directs his gaze to God. He finally looks towards God and he says this, he says, God, you are my portion.

What does that mean? What does it mean for God to be our portion? See, in the Old Testament times when Israel came out of Egypt and they went into the promised land, God divided up the promised land into 12 bits and he gave it to the 12 tribes.

Each land has a portion of the land as their inheritance. So you can think of portion as real estate. So, the interesting thing when God divided up the land is this, is that every tribe got a piece of the real estate but to the tribe of Levi, this one particular tribe, God didn't give them any land.

God said to them, to the Levites, he says, I am your portion. I am your inheritance. Now, I wonder whether you think now, hey, does it sound like the Levites drew the short straw here?

[39 : 56] Do you think the Levites are like, oh man, I was really hoping that we'd get remiera? See, God didn't say to the Levites, hey guys, for your troubles, you know, I know you guys drew the wrong, the short straw, but I'm going to make sure you get a lot more real estate in heaven.

There's so much more land, more beautiful, more milk and honey. That's not what he said. He said, guys, I am your portion. I am your real estate.

See, I think our issue is this. At the crux of the issue, we kind of do this mathematical thing when we come to God. We go, A plus B must be greater than A itself, right?

You know, A plus B equals greater than A. Whatever B is, and so we kind of come to God and we're like, God plus money or God plus prosperity must be better than having God himself, right?

Because it's math. It makes sense. We want God and money, God and real estate, God and wealth and prosperity and success and fame, popularity.

[41 : 07] Whatever you want to throw in that B column. See, friends, what if the math just doesn't stack up? What if when you're comparing the eternal, infinite God, the gift that he is offering is himself and the gift is just too large?

You can't just grab one with one hand and grab another with another hand. You need both hands to grab hold of this amazing gift that God has given to you. Friends, we can't do math with God.

We can't come to God and think that we just be more happier if we have a little more. Levites did not draw the short straw and neither did you if your wealth, if your desire is in Jesus.

Now, I want to conclude now. Notice one other thing about this. Asaph says that God is his portion forever. You notice that? Forever.

Now, what he means is this. You see the rich guy he's been envying the whole time, the rich, wicked man who's been, you know, mocking God and oppressing other people, ripping off people left and right.

[42 : 22] When that guy who has lots of real estate, maybe, when that guy dies, he's going to find that his real estate is actually really fake estate because his portion is not going to go with him.

He's not going to take any of his riches to the grave. But when Asaph dies, when his heart stops beating, God is still his portion.

God's bond with Asaph does not terminate at death. See, this is what Asaph says, he says, my flesh and my heart may fail. Yes, I will die. My body may break down, my heart may stop beating, but God is the strength of my heart.

So my heart will beat again. God will not surrender me to death. See, Asaph's one of these guys in the Old Testament, I think. He's one of these guys who kind of fumbled around in the dark as he was in a turmoil seeking God and he fumbled around and grabbed hold of something solid.

He grabbed hold of the hope of resurrection. The hope of enjoying God's presence forever. But you and I, we don't have to fumble around.

[43 : 38] Unlike Asaph, we have something so much clearer because we've seen that at the cross, Jesus didn't just die for our sins to pay for our guilt. He rose from the dead.

On the third day, he showed us that there's life beyond the grave. He showed us that he has defeated death and that he is promising that you and me, if we hold on to him, if we keep following him, that he will one day resurrect us into a new life and a new heaven and a new earth.

And it's there that we will enjoy God who is our portion forever. So friends, I want to ask that when you look around the world and you see all kinds of people enjoying all kinds of success and prosperity and all the things that you want, I want to ask that you just look away.

Direct your gaze back at God and realize that he is your portion and your portion is so much better. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we are so unworthy of your great, great love towards us.

even though like Asaph, we have often behaved like a beast. We've chased after all kinds of idols thinking that they will satisfy us but Lord, we did not realize that the greatest treasure, the greatest riches in the world is right before our eyes and the person of Jesus.

[45 : 15] Help us to see him. Help us to love him. Help us to recognize just how great our portion is in him.

Guard our hearts Lord, let it astray from you. Guard our hearts so that we'll continue to be steadfast, hoping in you, trusting in you until the day we see you face to face.

Thank you and pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen.