

Introduction: Over half of Psalm 73 is devoted to explaining in great detail the problem that we have. Now, Asaph hasn't met us, and he never lived in the twenty-first century, but the similarities between him and us make the 3000-year difference almost disappear.

We're going to examine each piece of this passage one at a time, then at the end, we'll see how they come together to show us the whole picture.

I. THE PSALMIST'S PROBLEM (1-15)

A. What He Believed (1) - God is good to His people.

1. Asaph's problem begins with theology! "God is good to Israel."
2. Promise to Abraham: Gen 12.2 *I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing...*
3. Promise to Israel: Dt. 28.1-2 *And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, ... all these blessings shall come on you...*
4. Proverbs:
 - a. 10.22 *The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.*
 - b. 11.8 *The righteous is delivered from trouble, and the wicked walks into it instead.*
 - c. 13.21 *Disaster pursues sinners, but the righteous are rewarded with good.*
 - d. 22.4 *The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life.*
5. **Point:** The Bible says that God blesses His people.

B. What He Saw (2-12) - But pagans have the good life.

This part of the chapter is bookended by its theme, stated in vs 3 & 12.

1. Their Prosperity (4-5)
 - a. They enjoy pain-free lives (4a).
Some versions say *in death*, but *until death* is a better translation (ESV).
 - b. They consume abundantly (4b).
This "fatness" is not bad, but represents fullness and wealth.
 - c. They escape trouble (5a)
Money allows people to buy their way out of difficulties.
 - d. They have an elite status over us (5b).
Unlike the rest of mankind, normal afflictions don't seem to affect them.
2. Their Wickedness (6-11)
 - a. Wicked Actions (6-7)
 - They're proud of their pride (6a).
Necklace = prominently displayed jewelry.
 - They're comfortable in violence (6b).
Clothes = every day apparel, surrounds the entire person.
 - They're gluttonously greedy (7a).
This time, the bulging of the eyes confirms that abundance is being abused: gluttony.
 - They like breaking the rules (7b).
"Overflow with follies" vs. "run riot" - their hearts "overstep" - they go past the limits and transgress boundaries of morality and propriety.
 - b. Wicked Words (8-9)
 - They speak scornfully (8a).
 - They threaten oppression (8b).

- Their words are arrogant against God and man (9)
 - c. Wicked Example (10-11)
 - People look to them as trend-setters (10)
 - They confuse God's mercy with approval (11).
 - 3. **Point:** When you look at the world, it looks like pagans enjoy the fullest lifestyles.
- C. What He Wondered (13-15) - Is holiness as pointless as it looks?
1. External and internal godliness seem vain (13, cf. Jas. 4.8b).
 2. Godly people suffer (14).
 3. This is a faith-shaking predicament (15).
It is OK to struggle through these questions. Don't broadcast your struggles in a way that makes others doubt (I Cor 8), but talk with spiritual people who can help you.
 4. **Point:** If God blesses people who follow him, but wicked people have the best lives, is following God worth anything?

II. THE PSALMIST'S SOLUTION (16-28)

- A. The End of the Wicked (18-20)
1. Their plans are clouded by uncertainty (18)
 2. Their lives move toward sudden destruction (19).
Exalted like the shellfish, lifted by an eagle to drop it on the rocks and devour it.
 3. Their legacy disappears into thin air (20).
 4. **Point:** The keyword is "end" – God will not let this problem continue forever.
- B. The Future of the Righteous (21-26)
1. Our Unworthiness (21-22)
 - a. Our near-sightedness makes us bitter (21).
 - b. Our doubt makes us spiritual brutes (22).
 2. God's Goodness (23-26)
 - a. God holds our hand to keep us near (23).
 - b. God guides us to glory (24).
Our "afterward" is a contrast to the sinner's "end" (17). Now we see "their wealth vs. my difficulty," but then it will be "their destruction vs. my glory."
 - c. God is all we need for everything (25).
 - d. God is our present strength and our future inheritance (26).
Even before we reach the "afterward" of glory, God's presence today is immeasurably better than the sinner's wealthy ease.
 3. **Point:** Our future is glorious and secure; God's guidance and strength are enough for our present.

Conclusion: First, remember that the wicked face a dreadful end; no amount of money can save their souls (Mk 8.36). Second, rejoice that God satisfies us fully, today and forever.

Look at Jesus as your example in this fight for joy. He is our example, *who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame* (Heb 12.2).