

What's Wrong with This Picture?

Taken from Psalm 73

Foundation

Before you begin today's lesson, stop and pray. Take care of anything that might be occupying your mind (i.e., questions for God, asking His forgiveness, etc.), so that your heart is open and teachable before Him. Spend a moment thanking God for His hand on your life—even when circumstances might seem “unfair” on the outside.



Does it ever seem unfair when people who do wrong have it better than those who do what's right?

Asaph sighed as he looked up from his parchment. The words he wrote reflected honest thoughts that came from both experience and observation.

“Truly God blesses His people, the Israelites, and especially those who follow His commands,” Asaph stated with confidence. “Yet, I nearly fell over,” he admitted, “when I saw the proud and wicked get their way and have success in life. I struggled. I was close to losing my perspective and foundation in the Lord.”

Asaph paused to reflect on what he had observed about godless people and

how it bothered him. “The wicked appear to be carefree; they seem to have all they need—unbothered by the troubles that plague everybody else. They wear pride like a necklace and strut about, clothed in cruelty. They scoff and speak only evil, seeking to crush others. If that isn’t enough,” Asaph described, “they boast against heaven itself, and people listen to them and turn from God! This...this describes the life of wicked people! Seemingly problem-free and enjoying a life of ease while their riches just multiply!”

Although Asaph didn’t say so, the words, “it’s not fair” lay dangerously close to the tip of his tongue. It was something that had surfaced from the deep struggles of his own heart. “Are my efforts to keep my heart focused and to live a godly life for nothing? The wicked seem to get all they desire, yet I experience trouble all day long!” *What’s wrong with this picture?* Asaph had thought to himself. “I tried to understand why the wicked prosper, but it got the better of me. It wasn’t until I came into Your sanctuary, Lord, that I gained a new perspective on the matter. There, I was reminded of the destiny of the wicked,” he whispered, “for instantly they will be destroyed and taken away in terror. When Your judgment comes upon them, they will vanish from this life. How foolish I was to be envious of them! My focus was totally wrong, and I reacted like an animal without sense.” Asaph admitted.

Asaph was a Levite musician appointed by David to serve in the worship services (1 Chronicles 16:5). Twelve psalms are credited to his name (Psalm 50, and Psalms 73-83), although some were written by his sons, who inherited his position.

Both Psalm 73 and Psalm 49 are considered “wisdom psalms” and share similar messages, although written by different people. The psalmist in verses 16-17 of Psalm 49 states: “Do not be overawed when a man grows rich, when the splendor of his house increases; for he will take nothing with him when he dies....”

A moment of quietness filled the room as Asaph leaned back in his chair and considered the rest of the words he would write. A sense of awe and worship flooded his heart as he thought about God's faithfulness and goodness. "Even though my spirit was bitter within me as I observed the wicked, You didn't give up on me! You took me by the hand and directed me in your wisdom. I don't need anyone in heaven but you, Lord. In this whole earth, there is nothing I desire more than You," he exclaimed. "Even though my body will eventually fail me," Asaph admitted readily, "You, God, are my true strength and all that I need forever. It is Your nearness that is my good."

Footwork

Quickly turn in your Bible to Psalm 73 and read verses 16-17. Look at the focus of verse 16.

Now compare that to the focus of verse 17. Do you see any differences? What were the results of each focus?



It's easy to lose our focus when we compare our experiences in life with others, or expect rewards and benefits (but don't get them). Like Asaph, we are prone to question: "Is living a godly life really worth it?!" Such emotions are normal, and you will most likely experience them at some point in your life. Don't let them throw you! It is all too easy to look at this present world and think that's all there is to life. It's not. Don't be fooled. Instead, come before God and ask Him to help you gain His perspective. He will show you what's wrong with your picture, and then give you an even bigger and better one to look at! Keep your focus on Him—not on those around you.