

**Welcome to the
Common Ground Café!**



Sunday, January 28, 2024

**When Good Things Happen to Bad People
A Study of Psalm 73**

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How would you explain to a child why God does not knock down bullies and troublemakers at school?

In Psalm 73, a man named Asaph admitted to a season of doubting God's goodness and power. Read verses 1-3 and summarize what was the source of his nagging doubt.

In verses 4-12, the poet lists the ugly qualities of the godless. Identify the verse where you find the following qualities:

- Pride. Verse _____
- Oppression. Verse _____
- Evil schemes. Verse _____
- Arrogance. Verse _____
- Rejection of God. Verse _____

In these same verses, the poet lists things enjoyed by the godless despite their ugly qualities. Identify the verse where you find the following benefits enjoyed by the godless:

- Health. Verse _____
- Attention. Verse _____
- Wealth. Verse _____
- Worry-free. Verse _____

Read verses 13-14. What was he hoping his pure heart would get him?

Read verses 15-17 and answer the following questions:

In verse 15, what caused him to clamp a hand over his complaining mouth?

In verses 16-17, how successful was he at solving his doubts on his own?

What effective strategy helped him start solving his doubts?

Why do you think going to church (entering the sanctuary) helps you maintain your faith better than just going it alone?

What does the poet remember about the final end of the godless (verses 18-20) and the final end of the faithful (verses 23-24)?

Back in verses 4-12 he seemed to be jealous of the benefits the godless enjoyed. What does he discover in verse 25 that helped him overcome this jealousy?

In his book *Counterfeit Gods*, Tim Keller wrote:

How do you respond to unanswered prayers and frustrated hopes? If you ask for something that you don't get, you may become sad and disappointed. Then you go on. Hey, life's not over. Those are not your functional masters. But when you pray and work for something and you don't get it and you respond with explosive anger or deep despair, then you may have found your real god.

In verses 1-14 Asaph admitted a time when he wasn't enjoying the health and wealth that the godless enjoyed, and he responded with (to use Keller's words) "explosive anger" and "deep despair." When we react like Asaph did, what do these emotions reveal about where we've placed God in the order of what's important to us?

Pastor Tom suggested that Asaph's loyalty to God was a means to an end in the first half of the poem (verses 1-14) but it was a glorious end in itself in the second half (verses 15-28). Do you agree, and why or why not?

Read Psalm 73:25 and John 6:66-69. What is the similarity between Peter's declaration and Asaph's declaration in 25 and?

There's a hope that literally surrounds Asaph's despair and doubt. Find it in the verse that *begins* and *ends* the poem.



Close with praise reports and prayer requests