

Psalm 73

*Psalm 73:21 When my heart was embittered and I was pierced within,
22 then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.*

Asaph, the author of this psalm, had recently emerged from a dark night of the soul that almost destroyed his faith. What brought on this dark night, and how did God rescue Him? This is what he explains for our instruction.

Asaph became spiritually despondent because he envied the temporal comforts of wealthy unbelievers (73:2,3). He observed that their wealth spared them from many pains and problems (73:4-12), while his own allegiance to God had resulted in many hardships (73:13,14). He had almost concluded that trusting God was for suckers, and contemplated teaching this cynical perspective to others (73:15).

But then, when he went to God's sanctuary (where he was presumably reminded of God's Word), he realized that he had been looking at only part of the picture. God's Word reminded him of two truths that changed his perspective and rescued his faith.

1. The first of these truths reminded him of the actual state of the godless wealthy people that he had been envying. *"17 Then I perceived their end. 18 Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. 19 How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors! 20 Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form . . . 27 For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You."*



By observing that godless wealthy people enjoyed more comfortable lives, Asaph had almost concluded that trusting in God was useless. But that is not the whole story according to God's Word. After death, the godless must face God's judgment. Their fate will be eternal destruction, which infinitely outweighs any benefit that temporal wealth can provide. For our ultimate destination is far more important than our temporal condition. What ultimate value is there in riding in a luxurious car when its destination is eternal destruction?

2. Conversely, riding in an uncomfortable car is not so bad when God is riding with you, and when you know that its destination is eternal life. God's Word reminded Asaph that, despite his temporal difficulties, he possessed true riches through his relationship with God. *"²³ Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand. ²⁴ With Your counsel You will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory. ²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. . . ²⁸ As for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works."* "Nevertheless" marks the decisive contrast between a comfortable life without God and a difficult life with God.

- God is continually protectively present in the lives of those who belong to Him. Even though we cannot see Him, He holds our hand so that we will not fall. He guides us through times of darkness with the counsel of His Word. He provides us with spiritual strength and sustenance even in the midst of failing health. He is our refuge in all of the storms of this life!
- God provides joy and contentment for those who trust Him in this life. Experiencing His nearness and telling others about His love are our highest good. Because we have Him, we have

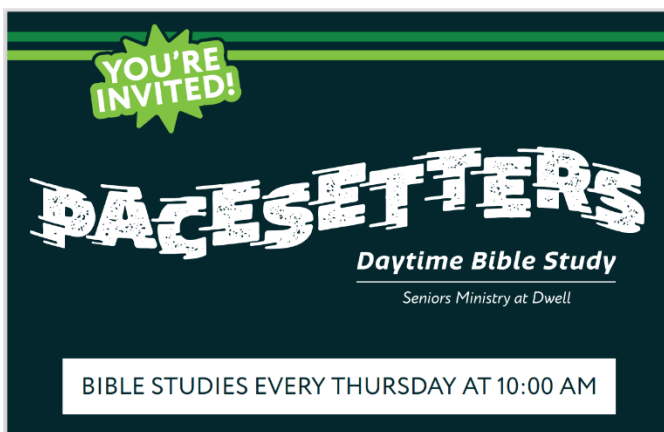


the best that this life has to offer – so we don't have to be subject to restless cravings for other things.

- God promises fulness of life with Him after this life. As wonderful as His protection and joy are in this life, they are only foretastes of what is to come. In the next life, He will welcome us into His glorious presence for all eternity. He is our portion forever – the one Inheritance that will fully and forever satisfy our eternal souls!

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your great mercy. Even when I doubt Your goodness and envy the godless, You hold on to my hand. Even when I am taken in by self-deception, You remind me of Your truth. Even when I let go of You, You never let go of me. Help me today to take refuge in You, to thank You for Your goodness, and to tell others of Your excellence.

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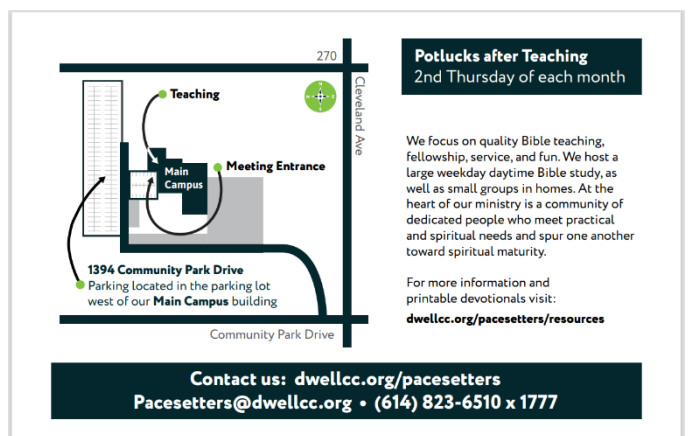
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