



Pointers and questions on the book of

Psalms:
Selection A

PSALMS

Session 5

Psalm 73

The dangers of envying the prosperity of those who despise God

Summary

Asaph, a man of God, has been sorely tempted to abandon his faith in God because of the way that wicked people seem to prosper. By contrast, he himself has had a hard time, in spite of trying to maintain godly standards. He draws back from the brink, however, when, in the sanctuary, he sees the whole scenario in true perspective—in the light of God's ultimate judgment.

- v1-3** Asaph sets the scene: in spite of God's undoubted goodness, Asaph himself had come close to losing his faith as a result of focusing on the prosperity of those with no time for the Lord.
- 4-14** The apparently happy lot of the wicked, who seem to get away with murder and, instead of suffering, do well. Asaph wonders whether he has been a fool to stick with God.
- 15-17** Asaph's confusion is sorted out when he looks at the whole scenario from the angle of the final destiny of both the wicked and the righteous.
- 18-28** The awful destiny of the wicked makes their current prosperity seem unimportant. And the joyful destiny of the righteous makes their current sufferings seem unimportant.

Questions to get you thinking

1. Some preachers present a 'prosperity' message—that God wants Christians always to have the best of everything. What bearing does this psalm have on that message?
2. What attitudes, common to the godless, can you identify in v4-12?
3. In v13 Asaph implies that the main motivation for godliness is the prosperity it allegedly leads to. Clearly he is wrong. But why, then, *should* we aim to be godly?
4. What do you think he means in v14 by being 'plagued' and 'punished' as a follower of the Lord?
5. What was it that got Asaph's thinking back into balance?
6. The 'sanctuary' in v15 was the Tabernacle of David, where praise to God was offered continually. What would be the equivalent in our day? Is it a place necessarily, or perhaps an attitude or viewpoint?
7. What, according to this psalm, is the destiny of the wicked and the righteous?
8. We live in a materialistic society today. How is this psalm, then, of particular relevance to us?
9. 'It is good to be near God', concluded Asaph (v28). Are *you* near God? What adjustments could most of us make to ensure that we stay near him?

