



Distraction

Often, it is a simple matter to become distracted by those around us. People can easily seem to have more material things, more money, more happiness, more of everything. But is this a reputable standard by which to judge our lives? I should think not. Nonetheless, this kind of distraction is most unpleasant because of the painful damage it brings. This damage can develop to the point that what Asaph went through can easily become any man's story.

(Psa 73:1-6) A Psalm of Asaph. Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.



is good to Israel, and even those who are of a clean heart. On the surface, this seems like a beautiful perception. Haven't you even said something like this? "My, my. God is so good to my friends, but especially to him or her who seems to have everything. She is so beautiful. He is so prosperous." That's what Asaph was doing. It sounds wonderful, doesn't it?

{2} But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.

It usually does some good to read the next verse though. Notice the word, 'but?' This three letter contraction sets what follows in contrast to what preceded it. After Asaph's beautiful statement, he contrasted it with a statement of his own affairs. "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped." He's talking about how much in despair he was. He felt like he had lost control; that his footing was beyond repair. Now, he's sounding, instead of wonderful, desperate. What was he looking at? *Usually, when someone is desperate, he is also distracted by things around him.* What was

Look at what he is saying. God

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distracting him?

{3} For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

{4} For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. {5} They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.

He was caught up with envy towards the foolish. He couldn't seem to ignore the wicked and their prosperity. Have you ever had money problems? Maybe this was going on in Asaph's life? To him, nothing could stop them and their seeming successes. They seemed so strong to Asaph. To him, they didn't have anywhere near as much trouble as others. They were far more blessed by God than he was. At least, that's what he thought as he continued to focus on them.

{6} Therefore pride

compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment.

Then, something changed. He realized that these people, these prosperous, wealthy, and strong people were surrounded with pride. Pride encompassed them like a wrapping of chains. Not only were they prideful, they were violent. Violence was their clothing. This is crazy. But, that's not all he noticed.

(Psa 73:7-11) Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. {8} They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. {9} They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. {10} Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to

them. {11} And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?

They were so prideful that they scoffed at God. They refused to recognize God as the true source of prosperity and blessings. Sounds like our world today, doesn't it?

(Psa 73:12-16) Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.

Asaph finally labeled them for what they were. These were ungodly people, people who prosper in the world. People whose riches increase. These people were driving him nuts. He couldn't stand how they had so much, but didn't have God.

{13} Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.

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{14} For all the day long
have I been plagued, and
chastened every morning.

This bothered him so much that he was plagued all day long with these thoughts. He'd wake up thinking about it. He'd go to bed thinking about it.

{15} If I say, I will speak thus;
behold, I should offend against
the generation of thy children.
{16} When I thought to know
this, it was too painful for me;

No matter what he thought, he couldn't put his thoughts in order. He was in pain because of the constant reminder of these ungodly people. This is why he thought God had deserted him, why he thought his steps had well nigh slipped. But, had God forsaken him? Had God withdrawn his blessings from him?

(Psa 73:17) Until I went
into the sanctuary of God;
then understood I their end.

It wasn't until Asaph returned to God and His Word that he was able to collect his thoughts and deal with his misery. But when he did, he soon realized that those prideful folks had theirs coming. Going to God in troubled times is a sure solution to the pain of distraction. Prideful people are everywhere, but they are the ones in trouble, not Asaph, or you!

(Psa 73:18) Surely thou
didst set them in slippery
places: thou castedst them
down into destruction.

Asaph saw that these prideful people were the ones who stood in slippery places. They were the ones appointed to destruction. What a change of perspective! Asaph was filled with despair, defeat, and all because he lost

his godly focus. God never lost Asaph though.

(Psa 73:19-23) How are they
brought into desolation, as in
a moment! they are utterly
consumed with terrors. {20}
As a dream when one awaketh;
so, O Lord, when thou
awakest, thou shalt despise
their image. {21} Thus my
heart was grieved, and I was
pricked in my reins. {22} So
foolish was I, and ignorant: I
was as a beast before thee. {23}
Nevertheless I am continually
with thee: thou hast holden
me by my right hand.

As you can see, these ungodly people would be made desolate in a moment. Here's a very interesting realization. These same prideful people were prone to terrors. They were consumed with fears. If you have ever been afraid, you know how painful fear can be. Even though they

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appeared so prosperous, healthy, strong, and more, internally, they were actually quite miserable.

We learned of Asaph's pain, how his heart and mind faced intolerable pain. This was a foolish state, born out of ignorance. It was beastly thinking according to verse 22. We also learned of how Asaph was held by God's right hand of blessing and how God never deserted Asaph.

You just can't beat Asaph's closing verses:

(Psa 73:24-28) Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. {25} Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. {26} My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. {27} For, lo, they that are far from

thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. {28} But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

Pay close attention to the importance of trusting in God and declaring God's Word. If you draw near to God in your times of trouble, even though encompassed by multitudes of prideful people, you will be filled with God's strength forever. Don't trust in your flesh, and in your thoughts. Trust in God and resist the distraction of other, prideful people. Pride brings terror and pain, but especially separation from God. Look towards God and His Word. Declare his works and trust in Him. Your new-found focus will set you far above worldly distractions, and will keep you heaven-centered.

Much love in Christ,

Jerry D. Brown