

Protect Your Faith

Scripture Reading: Psalm 73:23-28

Note, in the title of this psalm, that it is attributed to Asaph (See Psalm 50, 73-83). He was a Levite who was a composer and a director of choirs that sung in the temple. In Psalm 73, Asaph described a crisis that involved him becoming overwhelmed by the evil in the world.

Psalm 73:1-3 – Asaph first declared the faithfulness of God. Then he shared his dilemma. Asaph stumbled over the seemingly prosperous condition of evil doers.

Psalm 73:4-12 – It appeared to him that the wicked lived long, spoke proudly and blasphemously, accomplished their wicked goals, and gained in wealth.

Psalm 73:13-16 – This perspective was aggravating to Asaph. His faith was withering. Yet, he didn't want to discourage other believers. So, he kept his thoughts to himself and let them fester inside.

Psalm 73:17-19 – A turning point came for Asaph when he went to worship God. There, in God's house, Asaph was reminded that the prosperity of the wicked is short-lived. Their temporary success blinds evil doers and causes them to be proud and full of vain confidence. Their hearts are hardened. They are headed to a swift destruction. In the big picture, they are not prospering. They are perishing. God's people are triumphing. See Psalm 37:1-40 (This psalm of David is an excellent follow-up to Psalm 73); Romans 8:28-39.

Psalm 73:20-22 – It is as if Asaph woke up and felt ashamed for doubting God and His ways. He felt like an animal before the Lord. Why did he let himself wallow in anxiety?

Psalm 73:23-28 – Then Asaph again declared the steadfastness of God. Our relationship with God is unchanged / undiminished by the deeds of the wicked. There is no one in heaven or on earth that we could desire more than God. He will guide us through this vale of sorrows and then receive us up into His heavenly glory (Psalm 48:14; 17:15). How the worship of the Lord protects our minds and hearts! See Philippians 4:4-9; James 4:6-10.

A summary of the statements in Psalm 73:23-28

Psalm 73:23 I am always with God because He is holding on to me.

Psalm 73:24 God is guiding me to a glorious future.

Psalm 73:25 I am stranded on God. I abandon all others for Him.

Psalm 73:26 I put no confidence in my natural self but depend on God alone for strength of will and heart. He is my resource forever.

Psalm 73:27 To abandon God is self-destructive.

Psalm 73:28 I need to keep moving towards God. As I grow my own faith, I will have a testimony that honors God and helps others.

Faith Challenged Again

In **John 6:66-69**, Jesus' ministry appeared to take a down-turn. A heated debate had resulted in many people turning away from Jesus and following Him no more. Jesus asked the twelve if they also were going to turn away. Peter gave a profound answer. There was no one else to go to. Jesus is the only way. They were stranded on gospel truth, along with the grace of God and His Son! See **John 5:19-24; 7:16-18; 14:1-6; Matthew 16:13-17**.

Faith Protected and Prospering

From the above illustration, we see that your faith will not prosper unless you keep your eyes on Jesus and not on the crowd! See **Hebrews 12:1-3; John 15:1-8**.

Philippians 3:12-15 – Our faith needs to focus on a goal to go forward. The Lord, who gave us faith, has a plan for us and wants us to fulfill His plan. Like riding a bicycle (especially when going uphill) we need to apply pressure on ourselves to keep peddling. You can't coast long! See the grace of the Lord, who reminds us when our minds are drifting! See **Philippians 2:12-13**.

Faith will Desire God's Word and Experience God through Scripture

I Peter 2:1-3 – We need to maintain a passionate hunger (like a newborn baby) for the pure milk that feeds our mind and spirit – God's Word. You are not just sampling ideas. You are tasting of the Lord's goodness and grace. He will keep your faith growing. See Psalm 34:1-22 (Peter quotes verse 8).

Romans 8:8-18 – When we are born again, we become spiritual people. We have wonderful advantages because God's Spirit resides in us. He helps us overcome sinful desires and practices. He comforts us and assures us that we belong to Him and that we have a glorious future. See II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20; 5:16-26; Romans 6:6-11; 8:26-39 cp. Jeremiah 29:11-13; 31:3; 33:3; Zephaniah 3:17). God's Spirit also helps us identify and fellowship with other believers (Romans 8:16 cp. I Peter 1:22-23; I John 3:23-24; 4:10-13; 5:1-3).

Romans 16:25-27 – In order to establish / strengthen your faith, God has set up His Word to keep you going forward. Everything, in the context of Christ and the Gospel, from the Old Testament prophets to the New Testament Epistles, is designed to help you keep your faith and to keep it growing. See Romans 1:11-12, 15-16 (cp. I Peter 1:25); 10:17; 15:4-6,13-14; II Timothy 3:15-17; II Peter 1:16-21; 3:10-18.

II Peter 1:2-11 - As you cooperate with God and apply yourself to the Scriptures and seek to build your faith, you will experience the grace of God ministering to you – confirming you, strengthening you, and protecting you. See John 10:27-29; I Corinthians 1:3-9; Ephesians 3:14-21; Colossians 2:6-10; Jude 1:20-21; I Thessalonians 5:16-24; James 4:6,8a,10; II Timothy 4:18.

Note for II Peter 1:2-11:

II Peter 1:5 says that we should add to our faith / supply/supplement our faith. There is a Greek word used, here, that means "To supply lavishly." The same Greek word is used again in II Peter 1:11. Here it tells us that God will minister/supply/provide an entrance into His heavenly kingdom with welcome and reward.

Summary: If you take gospel knowledge, with its exceeding great and precious promises, found in God's word (**II Peter 1:2-4**) and add to your faith those things that are listed in **II Peter 1:5-7**, you will be able to make sure of your true relationship with God and also be sure of rich reward in heaven (**II Peter 1:8-11** cp. II Corinthians 13:5).

See Matthew 6:19-21; 13:1-9,18-23; John 13:12-17; 15:1-8; I Corinthians 3:11-15; Ephesians 2:8-10; II Timothy 4:6-8; Titus 3:5-8; Hebrews 6:7-12; James 1:12,21-27; II John 1:8; Revelation 14:13.