

Seeing My Life Through God's Eyes

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I want you to open your Bibles to Psalm 73 tonight, please. Psalm 73 is a Psalm of Asaph and I'm taking a week away from Ezekiel that we might, that I just might encourage your heart here tonight, and that we might take some time to refocus our attention.

Coming to church is, it's like going to the spiritual chiropractor. We get out of whack, don't we? I mean, the world really does, it's like you lift things, you do things you shouldn't do, you turn, twist different, you just, you get out of whack, your body gets, and so you have to go sometimes. I don't know if you go to the chiropractor or not, or whatever, but I don't, but that's, I'm just perpetually out of whack.

But spiritually speaking, I find the need quite often to come before the Word, and get back into order, find... Because isn't it the Lord who brings order in your life, in your heart, in your home, in your thoughts? Yeah, and the world is just pinging, the world is just pinging, chaotic pinging. And sometimes as Christians, we can ping too. Sometimes as Christians, we can just get our, we can just lose sight of where we're supposed to be, what we're supposed to be doing, and where God wants us, and so forth.

Psalm 73 is a very heartfelt expose of Asaph, who basically confesses to us how he got out of whack, and got his heart off on other things. And he begins with his conclusion, which is interesting. We wouldn't normally do it this way in modern day literature. We would end. Woops, I just remembered I didn't turn my phone down. You might want to do that too. Make sure your phone's not going to call it or whatever.

So he begins with his conclusion saying, *"Surely God is good to Israel..."* (NIV1984) And that's it. *"Surely God is good..."* Surely...

And, when we're seeing things right, when we're seeing things from the perspective of order and understanding and peace, we can say, you know what? God is good.

And don't you hate it though when you're going through a hard time, and people come along and they tell you, God is good, and you want to smack them. And,

because you just don't feel it right at the moment. And they come along and they go, yeah, well, God is good. You say, just say it one more time. I'm going to deck you cause right now in my life, God doesn't feel good. Nothing feels good. And so don't say that to me because it's a foreign thing to me.

So he starts off and he says, “*Surely God is good to Israel, (so that's his conclusion) to those who are pure in heart.*” But he says, and here's his confession in verse 2. He says, “*But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold.*”

And we're all walking in the Lord. We're walking along with Jesus and we realize, that He keeps us and so forth. But we also know that we're usually about one decision or one stupid thought away from slipping sometimes.

And the psalmist here actually confesses that he had almost slipped, almost absolutely did a total face plant as it relates to his walk with the Lord, and understanding of the things of the Lord. And he says, and then he tells you why in verse 3.

He goes ahead, now he's, this is true confession night, okay? He says, “*For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*” Now we see the poverty of our country, but we also see the prosperity. And here, what Asaph was focusing on was the prosperity of the world that surrounded him, and he was noticing that it was primarily the wicked, or at least that's his perspective.

He was thinking, people that just really don't care about God seem to be getting along just great, and so he begins to look at them. And you know what happens when you look at something a lot, that accepting the Lord, but other things, when you look at them a lot, they get they get bigger and your vision often gets more skewed. Sometimes the more you focus on, the more narrow focused you are on something. And so he begins to express what he was feeling when he looked at the wicked.

And he says in verse 4. He says “*They have no struggles;*” which is an interesting conclusion to make because it is fundamentally not true. But at least from Asaph's perspective, he was saying to himself, they don't seem to have any stinking problems and he's bummed about this. It's like, man, if my neighbor would just suffer a little, I'd have a little consolation in life. If I at least I saw my neighbor having a bad day, I'd feel better.

You can tell this guy's just, oozing with compassion, but he says, “*their bodies are healthy and strong.*” It's like he's looking across the street at his neighbor.

Maybe you've got one of those neighbors across the street from you. And he says in verse 5, *"They are free from the burdens; (that are) common to man; they are not plagued by human ills."*

Now, once again, this isn't really a very realistic and correct picture of life, but from Asaph's. Please understand, from Asaph's perspective, and when you and I get our eyes off the things of the Lord, and we start focusing on the things of men, then it's easy to get skewed, right? Whenever you're looking down, whenever you're looking down, you're going to get skewed.

There's a great quote from Abraham Lincoln. He says something to the effect of, when people are looking at the world of men, looking down upon the world of men, he says, I have no problem believing that some would say after that, I don't believe in God, that an atheist... He says, I can understand why an atheist would say what he says as he looks down upon the world. He says, what I can't understand is how they can look up to the heavens and say, there is no God.

But, it's when we get our eyes fixed down here, that we start running into trouble. And so he's saying, so here's his perspective, it's all twisted and tweaked. He says, they have no burdens. They're not plagued by, stuff that everybody else is plagued with.

And then he says in verse 6, he says, *"Therefore pride is their necklace; (and) they clothe themselves with violence."* So pride and violence are just part of their everyday apparel. They live that way and pride is just that attitude of just, thinking about myself. And making self the focus of my life because of my pride and so forth.

And doing violence means basically not having a consideration for other people. I don't really, they don't really care, he's saying, they don't really care about other people because their pride makes them see inward, and they're so self-focused in life, that they really don't care about the concerns. or the needs, or the problems of other people. It just really isn't a major issue in their lives. They don't think about that. They're not thinking about, well how do they feel? How does the other person feel about it? And so forth.

He says in verse 7, *"From their callous hearts..."* Notice that. Not just from their hearts, but *"From their callous hearts,..."* A callous is something that grows on your skin when you rub it repetitiously and it becomes a hardened piece of skin. And a callous heart is something that the Bible speaks of related to hardness of heart. Related to someone who is no longer hearing the voice of

the Lord. They're now calloused to life, and the Lord, and people's needs, and concerns and so forth.

And he says, "*From their callous hearts (just naturally) comes iniquity; (it just, it naturally comes and) the evil conceits of their minds know no limits.*" And if you don't believe that, just watch TV.

I don't know if you ever—I heard somebody say a number of years ago that that this mode or the method of TV that we have now, which is this real life kind of thing where we're looking into people's lives. I remember hearing somebody say it was going to be short lived. And I remember being elated at hearing that statement for a moment until the passage of time proved it to be categorically false. I think it's bigger than ever, but anyway, I don't know.

I was watching this dumb channel the other day where they were they were rigging a car and you've probably heard about these before, but they rig a car with automatic locks and kill switch. And then they just leave it sit on a street with the keys in it and just wait for somebody to come along and steal it. And they have cameras put in there.

And if you ever want a wonderful lesson on the depravity of the human heart, just watch a program like that for about a few minutes. And you're either going to cry or just become callous and just, like, wow. But it really is amazing. It really is. And when you think about the things that people will say. I mean, this program basically shows these guys rigging this car, setting it up with this automatic locks so that, these guys get in and start driving and they turn the key, and they start driving the car. And then they get, let them get a little ways down the road to establish the fact that they've actually stolen the car. And then they, from a remote control, they shut it down. They just shut off the engine and lock the doors and the persons, and they're just in the car, and they're just in there going, yeah.

And there was these two young boys that got in the car and they were just and they're starting it up and driving. And they're just, and the camera shows in the car going, yeah! And the guy in the passenger seats just pumped, and he's got all this adrenaline going through him. And then the thing shuts down, and the doors lock, and the police surround him. And the same kid a couple seconds later is going, yep, this is what happens when you do this. He's lecturing the other guy and just a minute ago he was celebrating.

And then there was this woman, they showed this woman. I don't know why I'm telling you all this, but there was, maybe it's true confessions for me. But there

was this woman that came, they show this camera from a distance, and this woman comes and she looks in the car and notices the keys are there, and she walks away. Then she comes back a few minutes later, and she hops in the car, and he gets in the driver's seat. And you could tell she set him up to, hey, let's take this car, there's keys in it.

And so they drive down the road and you can see him she's sitting there and she's calling the shots, turn over there, turn here, let's go around the block. And also the thing just comes down, the door's locked, the engine kills, and she's putting her hand up, she's going, he made me do it. He made me do it and stuff.

And I'm thinking, the human heart, it just, it knows no bounds. The intrigues of the heart know no bounds. And to us as a viewer, and this is how God sees things all the time, we get this ability, to look into people's lives, which we probably shouldn't even have because it's kind of voyeuristic. But we get to see people, from the start, we get to see people go into a situation with every intention, I'm going to steal this car. And then lie like their life depends on it, as soon as they, I didn't steal this car, I was just going to move it around back. I wasn't, I didn't steal no car. Or, this is my friend's car, he told me to pick it up and bring it to him.

And we've been watching the program all along and we know that, it was planted there by the police. And it's and you watch people and I'm embarrassed for them. But on the other hand, I'm thinking, oh, that life is so tweaked. And the heart of sin has become so, so full. And now it's like, you look at people like that and as a pastor, I look at, I just go, oh. I look at them like something that's broken, not broken in a good way, like busted. It's busted.

And it's like what Asaph is seeing here when he looks at people and he says that their minds, the evil conceits of their minds, just simply know no limits. There's just, they're not limited, when it comes to the evil and so forth that they do.

And it says in verse 8, he says, also *"They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression."* So they're making threats to people. And he says, *"Their mouths (even) lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth."* In other words, they talk like they own the world and people believe them. They talk with boastful pride and they've just, and they got this attitude.

And here's an interesting thing in verse 10. He says, and this is the really amazing thing. And people turn to them. People actually turn to them and they say, wow, you're a cool guy. And we look back historically, when we

historically, we have the ability to look at like some of the most heinous dictators that have ever risen to power in the history of mankind. The Bible has a number of them that it gives us.

And then there are some, even in the last hundred years and so forth, like, I don't know if you've looked at a historical profile of like Hitler? The guy was crazy. The guy was out of his mind to the point of just insanity. And guess what? Huge crowds, huge crowds gathered around him because he, with the boastfulness of telling people that they were the supreme race, and we're going to cleanse the world of the inferior elements of it. And the white Caucasian Aryan race is going to rule the world like it was intended to.

And people go along with that kind of pride and arrogance and actually think, yeah, he's got a point. And now we look back on it from a historical perspective and we go, that was insane. That man was insane. But people get caught up in it and it feeds the flesh and they think, yeah, cause it's a... And this is what Asaph is seeing that people in their ignorance and naivete and so forth, just come along with this thing.

And it says, *"Therefore (in verse 10) their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance."* And they even make statements, like he says in verse 11, like, *"How can God know?"* They say things, they actually make claims or statements about God saying, well, *"How can God know?"* I mean, in other words, they limit God in many ways in His ability to know. And they'll even say *"Does the Most High have knowledge?"* And so they basically deny the wisdom and so forth of the Lord.

"¹² This is what the wicked are like— (they're) always carefree, (and) they increase in wealth." Now that was, again, it was it's a skewed perspective but it's a perspective nonetheless. And it's a perspective that Asaph made a determination about in the midst of the difficulties of his own life.

See Asaph and we're going to see this in the next verses, but Asaph is a man who is going through difficulty. He's a man who is going through stress. Ever been there? He's going through trial. He's going through difficulty. He's going through problems.

And, do you know, my dear brothers and sisters in Jesus, that problems and trials can skew your vision? Just read the Book of Job. Job was a man who saw clearly until hardship and difficulty came upon him, in a very, very, very difficult way. And then Job just started making a lot of accusations, and started, saying things about God's justice, and God's fairness, and so forth that just flat

out wasn't true. But it, it can do that to you. It can make you see things that aren't necessarily correct.

But what it does ultimately, when we begin to see things in a skewed fashion, is that then it's going to have a final reflection back to us, of course, because everything comes back to us, don't you know that? Everything ultimately comes back to how, my own standing, and the way I feel about this.

And that's what happens to Asaph here in verse 13 when he says, *"Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence."* And that is the conclusion that basically he has drawn. The conclusion is this, I've been wasting my time being a Christian. And again, he wouldn't have referred to himself as a Christian. I'm bringing it into the modern though.

Have you ever, do you ever stop to think about that? Have you ever allowed your mind to think about the things that you're missing out on because you're a Christian? I'm just talking about, when the mind just starts to spin uncontrollably, which probably, shouldn't happen terribly often, but He's thinking that way.

Asaph is allowing himself to think that way, and he's saying, he said, in my heart, he's thinking, *"Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure;..."* In other words, for nothing. That's what vain means, for nothing. In vain or for nothing, have I washed my hands in innocence?

And he says in verse 14, here's my situation. *"All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning."* He's feeling like God is punishing him. Now, again, that lets you know where somebody's at in terms of their walk with the Lord. We've talked about this many times.

When somebody comes and says, I feel like God is punishing me, they have told you volumes about their relationship with the Lord. And they are telling you in no uncertain terms, they are on a judicial standing with God. In other words, I mess up, He punishes me. I do good, He rewards me. They don't have a concept of grace. They don't have a true concept of mercy. They see God in terms of like they would a judge who sits on a bench and meets out judgment, punishment for wrongdoing. And that's their relationship with God.

And I got an email just the other day and I have to be careful because I know that people are watching this live on the internet and it could be, who knows the person that wrote me could be watching. I'm not going to give any names though, but I don't think this individual attends our fellowship.

But we have places on our website where people can just post questions and this was not something that she wanted to be public, but again I'm not going to give a name.

But the question was, I'm doing this, and I won't tell you what it was, but I'm doing this, and I'm miserable about it. And I know that it's not right. Is God going to send me to hell? And that's not an uncommon, question.

Unfortunately, the question itself expresses or reveals, if you will, a skewed view of God because this person is probably laboring under the belief that, good people go to heaven. And one of the things I was, telling our refuge group last Sunday night was, don't think that good people go to heaven, that's not true. Forgiven people go to heaven. And Jesus said, no one is good but God. (Mark 10:18) Okay? And if you aren't God tonight, then guess where that leaves you? In the not good category. Although that can be freeing to know.

And so good people aren't the ones who go to heaven, but yet there's a huge amount of the population that believe it. They're under the impression that good people go to heaven. And so people will constantly, they'll write me, or email me, or whatever. and or ask me even face to face. If I do this, will I go to hell because what the...? And that's a terrible way to live. Do you know that? That's a, oh man, I mean, I get the heebie jeebies just thinking about it.

To live your life thinking that, I wonder if that's the one that's going to put me over the edge? Is that the sin that's going to do me in? And so they're constantly worried about it, and they have no assurance. They have no assurance that they're going to heaven. And they're constantly worried, if I do this, if I do that, is that the thing that God is going to say? Well, you know what? That's it. You just, you crossed the line and you've passed the point of no return. And I'm taking your name, off the reserved list for heaven. And you're heading South and there's nothing you can do about it. Cry, weep, and wail as you may. You're going down.

Breaks my heart to think that somebody is actually living under that sort of an idea, but you know what? It's common. It's common. And so when somebody asked me that, if I do this while I go to hell? I got to just say, okay. Let's clear the table and let's start building all over again.

How do you get to heaven? Well, it's not by being a good person. You get to heaven by accepting Christ as your Savior. Inviting Him into your heart, believing that what He did on the cross was for you. Obviously turning from your old life that dominates, which is the Bible calls repentance, and turning to

God with all of your heart. And that's who goes to heaven. It's people who are trusting Christ to save them from their sins.

Now, let's ask the question again. You know what I mean? Now we put it into perspective. And we have to get off that judicial treadmill of thinking that every time I mess up, God's going to punish me, but if I do good, maybe He'll notice and give me a break. It's like, some people will say, I don't even want necessarily anything good from God, I wish He'd just leave me alone. And they know nothing of the goodness of the Lord.

And Asaph is so under it here, he is basically saying, I have been punished every morning. It's like every, my neighbor is across the street, reveling in his sin, and God is just scourging me every day. And he's looking at this thing as it appears on the outside, on the surface. And he's looking and saying, is this fair? God, is this how you treat your children? And then the people who spit in Your face, You just turn a blind eye and bless them. What's up with that? How is that just? How is that fair? That's what he's asking here.

And then he says, in verse 15, *"If I had said, 'I will speak thus,' I would have betrayed your children."* In other words, he's saying, if I made up my mind that this was going to be not just the attitude of my heart, these were going to be the words out of my mouth, and this is the way I was going to live, I see now.

And he's, again, he's looking at it now from the other side of the crisis, but he's saying, I realize now I would have betrayed the heart that You have for Your children. And Your love for them and the destiny that Your children have with You.

And so he goes on to say in verse 16 and this is another confession and I love this because it's so good. *"When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me."* Have you ever tried to figure out life? Have you ever looked at your life or what's going on in your life, or even in somebody else's life, which can be, by the way, more painful, sometimes.

When you've got someone that you love and you see them going through difficulty. And you've looked at it, and you've thought, and you've sat down to just figure it out. I'm just going to figure it out. And you're, you become haunted by your thoughts.

And it says it became *"oppressive to me,"* which is a word that basically means heavy. And it becomes a burden that you can't, you can't even carry. You can't lift, because you don't have the faculties to be able to figure it out. And yet

Asaph is trying to, he's trying to understand the justice of it all, and the equity of it all. And he's looking and he's saying, okay, my neighbor's being blessed, I'm being punished. I'm trying to live for You God, with all my heart. He couldn't give a rip about You. He, in fact, he boasts against You. He mocks You and all these things. And he's doing good, and I'm hurting, and about ready to give up hope, and I don't understand. I just don't understand. And it became a burden that became suffocating to him. And that's what happens, people, when you and I try to figure out the issues of life. It will suffocate you. It will snuff out your life.

Now here's the good news. God doesn't leave us in that position when we, at least when we turn to Him. I want you to go on and see what He says. He says, *"it was oppressive to me"* at the end of verse 16. And then He says this, *"¹⁷ till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood (and what did he understand?) their final destiny."*

The most incredible birthright of the children of God is that we have been given an invitation to access, not just the throne room of God where we can worship at His feet, but we've also been given access to the throne room of God where we can come to receive help in the time of difficulty and trial.

And part of that help is a picture, a perspective that God can give that is like no other. And it lifts the burden. And, Asaph is telling us here that, it wasn't just like I came into God's presence and then it didn't matter anymore. He's not saying that. Did you notice that? He's not saying that. He's saying that God gave him understanding from his trip into the throne room of God.

Makes me think about Solomon. You remember I was reading just recently where the Queen of Sheba came and cause she'd heard about Solomon and so she came to ask him all kinds of questions. And she sat and just listened to him and her final, as she was getting ready to leave she said, how fortunate, how blessed are the people who just sit in your presence. Even the doorkeepers, who can just sit and listen to you, as you expound wisdom. (1 Kings 10:8)

And do you know that we have one greater than Solomon that we can turn to? Whose wisdom is so much deeper than Solomon's? So much better than any human being? Solomon was incredible and the wisest man on the face of the earth, save that of Jesus. And yet we go to one who is so much greater and have access.

And that's what Asaph is saying. I tried to figure this out and I couldn't. And it became so heavy for me that I thought it was going to crush me and suffocate

the life right out of me. And then, then in my absolute turmoil of heart, I did what I should have done at the very beginning. I turned to God and I entered the sanctuary of God and then I understood. Because you see, God gives perspective. And what did he understand again? He says their final destiny. And here's what really is going on, okay, with the wicked. Okay. This is what's really going on.

He says in verse 18, *“Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors! ¹⁹ How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! ²⁰ As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies.”*

But then he says in verse 21, but, *“When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, ²² I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.”* Stop there, please, for a moment. This is really important.

It is one of the most glorious things about who you are and who God made you to be, that you and I can come into the presence of God, find wisdom, understanding, and insight for life's issues. Your dog can't do that and I'm not trying to be funny. Your cat can't do that. Of course, they're so dumb because they are senseless. They're senseless.

God has chosen to endow you and I with reason and understanding that transcends any kind of an animalistic view of life. When I mean animalistic, I mean a carnal. A carnal view of life, a carnal view of living, a carnal view of money making, pleasure.

You see, we're living in a world today that has gone over to the carnal. And it is a sensual world in which we live. Everything is about pleasure, everything is about titillating the senses, and all that goes along with it. And what we're doing is we're moving farther away from the image of God that that He wants to...

See the carnal appetites were given to us for us to enjoy life, but they were never given to us as a means of living our lives or an end in in themselves in which to live our lives. You see what I'm saying by that?

In other words, there's more to life than just pleasing myself, and pleasing my appetites. Now, that's not true for your dog. There is no more, there's nothing more for your dog or any other animal of the animal kingdom than just pleasing themselves. That's all there is. It's all they got. They can't think it through. They can't reason and make a determination based on that ability to reason.

And Asaph is saying that when I divorced myself from heaven's view for that period of time. When I focused on the issues of my neighbor and looked at the world here under the sun, and I didn't take God's Word into consideration, or His direction, and will, and wisdom, and so forth, I began to view life as an animal would view life. And I became senseless and I became like a brute beast.

Here's what's interesting. Paul says that in the last days, people will become cruel, senseless, and they will murder one another with increasing alarm. And they will do these things that go along with this whole idea of living life for the carnality of what I can get out of it. And Paul said that would be on the increase in the last days.

And why is it on the increase in the last days. Because we're moving away from the image of God. We're moving away from the focus of God to see things from God's perspective, and we're seeing things increasingly from the carnality of my own life, and so forth.

Don't think that because we're Christians, you and I can't be self-centered. Don't think that because we're born again and the Spirit lives within us, that you and I can't think 100 percent about ourselves, because we can. And that carnality is a decision away. It's a choice away all the time. I mean, living that life for me and for what I can get out of it and so forth. And it's something that is so easy for us to fall into because for many of us, we've been raised in such a generation where it's been preached to us from our earliest days to get out of life everything we can and to enjoy all that we can enjoy in life. And so now it's like a knee jerk reaction.

And so when I look at life, I just naturally think like, I think carnally, even though I'm a Christian. Now, as a Christian, I'm miserable, and I'm under conviction, and I know that it's not right, but I'm also realized many times I'm stuck and that only God can get me out.

But it's amazing to me how even born again Christians can be some of, can be still very, very, very self-centered. Myself included. So we have, it's something we always have to be watching out for. That brute beast that Asaph is referring to here. But why did, remember, notice here in verse 21, what preceded this senselessness and this ignorance and this beast attitude.

He says in verse 21, once again, *"When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered."* See that was the essence of what started the ball rolling. Bitterness and grief. Bitterness and grief.

Bitterness is, boy, it's something the Bible warns us about. Don't get going on bitterness. Don't let a root of bitterness grow up. The Bible says it defiles many people that it touches. Bitterness is one of the worst things and it will make you like a brute beast. It'll make you think like an animal. Rather than thinking like God, the thoughts of God, the heart of God.

It's like that can't even get through anymore because I'm so bitter. I'm just bitter about things. I'm bitter about people and circumstances and the past. And I'm bitter and angry. And I refuse to be reconciled. And I have no intention of going to somebody and saying, forgive me, or I forgive you, or whatever the case might be. I'm just going to revel in my bitterness. It'll make you like a dog. Like a mean old surly dog that bites people when they walk by. We become like a beast, instead of the image of God. And the work that Christ wants to do in our life, to make us soft hearted, and loving, and caring, and compassionate people.

And here's what he sees as he's with the Lord. In verse 23, he says, *"Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand."* Isn't that something that David saw too? And David would just say, He leads me. He leads me. He leads me beside quiet waters, David said. He restores my soul. He restores me. He leads me. (Psalm 23:2-3) David had a sense of the leading of the Lord.

Have you ever read the Psalms when you're going through a hard time and been just incredulous about how David could go through the things that he went through and find such peace in God. Because I have. I mean, here's a guy who's literally hunted. Talk about, like a brute beast. He's being hunted like an animal.

And Saul, because of his jealousy, had turned into a brute beast. I mean, to the point where the Spirit of God withdrew from him, and now he's being dogged by demonic spirits, and he's got this obsession with killing David, and David is on the run. We think somewhere between 10 and 13 years he ran for his life, lived in caves, lived among the Philistines part of that time, and so forth.

And yet, and we see such an amazing attitude in David because, even though he cries out to God many times and just goes God I need You. And I'm not going to make it without You, and stuff like that. But he most of the time ends his Psalms with just these such expressions of faith. And I'm going David, where do you get that? I want that.

David was a man who entered the sanctuary you guys. You don't get that just by reading the Psalms because you know what? And I'm not being irreverent here. I'm not saying that reading Psalms isn't going to help. What I'm saying is, David

went into the sanctuary, you got to go there too. You can't go into the sanctuary by someone else's description.

In other words, I can't just tell you what it's like to be in the presence of God and have peace. You got to go there yourself. And that's what David's prayers and Psalms ought to do for us. Not just say, wow, that's really cool, David went into the sanctuary of God and found peace. Isn't that great? Here I am a mess, but I'm sure glad somebody found it.

But rather, take that attitude where, David found peace in the midst of immense trial and difficulty. It's there. It's available. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. I'm going in by the blood of the lamb. I'm going in, which is the key that unlocks all access to God. I'm going in. I'm going to have that peace. I'm going to have that joy. I'm going to have that kind of, that perspective where David would say, but I know that you are with me. I know that the Lord will take me by my right hand and guide me.

Took Asaph, same thing, coming into the presence of God. See, he's a brute beast, he's upset, he's bitter, he's mad he's all this and that. And then he comes into the presence of the Lord, and then what does he believe? He's, I never left your hand. I know it now and I feel like such an idiot. But I forgot. I forgot. Because I was looking down here. I was looking down here.

Oh God help us from looking down here so much we forget God. And we don't come into His presence. And find peace, and grace, and strength, and wisdom, and power. Now that I'm in your presence, Asaph says, I see something. I see, first of all, I see their, oh, I see my neighbor, and I have a whole new attitude about him, and I see that, man, he's just one. He's on, he's literally on the cliff. I mean, his arrogance, and his pride, and his stupidity has him literally with a sword of Damocles hanging over his head and it's just, he's just one. He is on a slippery ground.

And I thought he was so blessed. And I thought, wow, I envy him. I don't envy him anymore. Because I've been in the presence of God, and I know. Now I see, that he's got this short wisp of a life, which sometimes, when we're young, we think is just going to, is so open ended. And the older we get, the more we realize how short it is, how brief it is. And it's so small and it's always gone if he doesn't turn to God. And after that it's destruction beyond your imagining.

And then I see about myself that I am here, God, I am right in your hand and I've never left. And I thought when I saw, I thought that my neighbor was just Mr. blessed. I thought I was Mr. punished. And I realized, that's not true. I'm the

one who's blessed. I just was seeing it wrong. God's doing a work in my life to form Christ in me. And yeah, that can be a painful experience because it involves pruning. Pruning. Pruning.

Have you ever pruned? You look at a tree that's been pruned? It looks dead. A couple years ago, a guy out here pruned some of our trees and I said, you killed them. He said, no, they're going to be okay. I said, no, you killed them. You killed the trees. I mean, it looked like, it's like... They were big, bushy, nice shade trees. Now they're just sticks looking like, ouch. And then yet, but the next spring they just, they explode with new leaves, and new life, and stuff and, but boy that pruning.

And what did Jesus tell us about that? That those who are fruitful in Christ, He prunes back so they'll be even more fruitful. (John 15:2) And that pruning process hurts and you and I can look at that pruning process and go, God's punishing me. No, God's pruning you, but He's pruning you so that you'll be even more fruitful. He loves you actually and you're in His hand. And you've never left and you never will because He promised that no one can snatch us out of His hand. That's a promise and I love this.

He says in verse 24. He says, *"You guide me with your counsel,..."* And that's the first thing. *"You guide me with your counsel..."* Do you know what the one most wonderful thing in the world is you guys, we have the Word of God. Do you know that the world doesn't have the Word?

By the way, I was looking, the reason I'm telling you some of the Abraham Lincoln quotes here tonight is because I was just looking at some online. I looked up this place that had all these Abraham Lincoln quotes and one of them, one of them was, *"a house divided against itself cannot stand."* Abraham Lincoln. I laughed. I said, he didn't say that. Jesus said that. He's quoting Jesus. So they're quoting Abraham Lincoln quoting Jesus. Well, the guy who wrote it down just never read the Bible. And does that surprise us?

Here's the deal. You and I have the Word of God. We have the counsel of God's Word. We've got the owner's manual to life sitting there on your lap. It's a how to manual: how to live, how to love. Husbands, it's direction for you. Wives. It's direction for you kids. It's direction for you, business, people, employees, servants, leaders. How to live, how to love, how to talk, how to, you name it, it's there in God's Word. Just look into it.

You and I have the counsel of God. We don't have to go through life stumbling around in the darkness. What does the psalmist say? Your word is a light, right?

It's a light and a lamp. (Psalm 119:105) What does that, what does a light do? It illuminates in the darkness so that I don't have to stumble.

Guys, there's a point where we have to, we have to determine in our hearts that we're going to commit ourselves to the study of the Word of God. And not let somebody else do all the work for us. where we personally are going to say, you know what, I'm going to know the Word of God, because this is wisdom. This is the counsel of God.

I mean, if God appeared in your bedroom tonight and said, okay, sit down on the bed. I want to talk to you. And He's like in glory and stuff like that. Would you go, well, I got to get up early so could you make it quick? I need to get up and get started with my day tomorrow. I need to get a good night's rest. So could you just?

No, you wouldn't do that. You'd say, you'd sit down and you'd say, talk to me, whatever. I mean, and you would hang on every syllable, wouldn't you? Well, guess what? He left you a love letter and not just the Word of God, but He's also given you His Holy Spirit to allow this Word to come to life in us. And not only does the Word of God, does the Holy Spirit help us to understand the Word of God, the Holy Spirit enlarges the Word of God in our hearts. You know that? He takes the Word of God and He unlocks it and unfolds it like you're unfolding a letter.

And it's like, sometimes if you just read the Word of God, it's like, well, that's what it says right there but when you give it to the Holy Spirit, He goes, well, but see, there's layers here. Let me show you this. Boom. And He starts opening it up and you start meditating on the Word and you start thinking about it. And the Holy Spirit just opens it up. And it's like, whoa, I didn't even know that was in that verse. I didn't know all that. All that insight and understanding was there. You've given me counsel, Lord, in your Word. You haven't just given me words on a page. They're alive through the power of the Holy Spirit. Wow.

We need to determine in our hearts that we're going to take advantage of that counsel. And he says to that, he says, I'm, I have this counsel from the Lord. “*24 You guide me with..., (it and then he says) and afterward you will take me into glory.*”

So here's the deal. Okay, here's the deal. So here I am. I'm living life. Yeah, it's a drag I'm living in a fallen world sin all around me. And here's what I got to look forward to: I'm living in God's hand, He's never going to take me out. He's never going to leave me or forsake me. He's going to guide me all through life

with His counsel. He's going to be there with me and then afterwards He's going to take me into His presence. It's all a pretty good deal to you.

I mean, the world doesn't have that to look forward to. The world doesn't have any of those things to look forward to. The Bible says that for you right now, He's closer than a brother. He sticks closer than a brother. (Psalm 18:24) He is the one who is right there by your side. He knows everything you're going through. He invites you to come to Him when you're weary, when you're heavy laden, He promises rest. He promises strength.

He says, I will give you strength that will be like a young person again. (Psalm 103:5) I can renew and I can transform your mind. I can enable you. I can empower you. I can strengthen you. I can encourage you. I can comfort you. I can bless you. And I will do all these things if you'll just walk close to me. And it's like, wow! Anybody else got a better offer? And then God says, oh, by the way, after it's all done, I'll just, you'll come be with Me for eternity. Yeah. Where do I sign up?

But see, those are the things that you see in the presence of the Lord. That's not the stuff that you see by keeping your eyes down here, looking at your problems all the time. Got a problem. Got a problem. Got a problem. Got a problem. That's all you're going to see. Okay. It's when you're looking and enter the sanctuary of the Lord.

And then I love what he says in verse 25, *"Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you."* And by the way, that's another fringe benefit of coming into the sanctuary of God.

The things of the world begin to pale in comparison. And we start going, you know what? All the stuff that I used to think that I was going to live my life for, isn't that important anymore. Because I've been in the presence of God and everything there is so much better that everything here on earth is like, yeah, whatever. Isn't that cool? But again, that comes from looking at the Lord, doesn't come from looking at the world. The more you look at the world, the more you want the world.

And then he says in verse 26, and this may even be an expression of his own, physical condition at the time. He says, *My flesh and my heart may fail*, (so he may have been in poor health at that time, he says) *but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.* Wow. My portion.

That, that points back to, it basically points back to the traditional method of blessing your child. In Jewish society and Middle Eastern society, a child would receive a portion of the father's estate based upon their order of birth. And the firstborn son would receive the first and the best and the most, and then any successive sons may receive a lesser portion depending. So there was a birthright that goes along, there's a portion that goes along with birthright is what I'm trying to say.

But here the psalmist says, when I entered the presence of God, I found out something. He's my portion. God's my portion. He's it. It's not like He's going to give me this or that or nothing. He's going to give me Himself. He is my portion and if I've got God, I've got everything I need. In fact, I've got everything because I've got God. So He is my portion and my portion forever by the way.

Verse 27. So, *“Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.”* That's what's going on with my neighbor and stuff. may God save his soul. *“²⁸ But as for me, (you know what?) it is good to be near God. (flat out, it's just good to be near God and) I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; ...”* He is my refuge. He's the one I hide behind when life gets hard now and I'm just going to just hang back behind that refuge. And I'm going to sit back there and just *“...tell (everybody about) ...your deeds.”* You're wonderful deeds in helping and blessing and so forth.

Isn't that a great Psalm? It's one of my favorites. Some of you guys that have been around before have heard me teach it before. But it's one of those Psalms that you really need to go through verse by verse like this maybe once a year or more often.

Maybe even if you're going through a hard time just to remind myself Lord, I don't want to be a brute beast. I don't want to think about life from the perspective of carnality. I want to think about life from Your perspective. I want to see it as you see it and I want that perspective to govern my life. I don't want fear to dictate my life

I want you to be the Lord of my life, not fear to be the Lord of my life. And I need to come into Your presence. I mean, I need to press in until I'm there. And I don't want to just read about it anymore. I don't want to read about somebody else who got in. It's like, wow, it was great. Let me tell you about it. I'm not going to sit at their feet and be warmed by someone else's fire. I want to press in and I want to know You for myself. I want to learn of You and grow and be comforted and filled with Your grace. Transformed into your image. Let's pray.

Father, I am so grateful for Your Word that illuminates our path before us. And we're amazed that You've given it to us and we are so completely unworthy of it. For each one of us have turned to carnality at times. We've become like brute beasts who live for nothing more than the next meal. Or to defend my territory with a snarl and a bark. Or to live my life for the passing moment and what it can provide for me.

And Lord, too many times we've looked upon life and we've judged You for it. We've judged You by what we could see and what we could discern. And in the oppressiveness of our thoughts and the bitterness of our heart, we judged You and we condemned You. Lord, forgive us.

And by the blood of Jesus Christ, whom we claim as our Savior and Lord, may we enter into Your holy presence and find the peace and the power and the perspective that we are lacking in this world. And may we see things as You see them and not be limited by the sight of our own flesh.

We thank You and praise You for the good things that you're doing in our lives. We ask, Lord God, that we would draw near to You to know You better, to love You more, to serve You more.

Be with us, Lord God. We ask all of these things in the name of Jesus, our Savior, amen.