

WHEN GOOD THINGS HAPPEN TO BAD PEOPLE

PSALM 73

¹Surely God is good to Israel,
to those who are pure in heart.
²But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;
I had nearly lost my foothold.
³For I envied the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
⁴They have no struggles;
their bodies are healthy and strong.
⁵They are free from common human burdens;
they are not plagued by human ills.
⁶Therefore pride is their necklace;
they clothe themselves with violence.
⁷From their callous hearts comes iniquity;
their evil imaginations have no limits.
⁸They scoff, and speak with malice;
with arrogance they threaten oppression.
⁹Their mouths lay claim to heaven,
and their tongues take possession
of the earth.
¹⁰Therefore their people turn to them
and drink up waters in abundance.
¹¹They say, "How would God know?
Does the Most High know anything?"
¹²This is what the wicked are like—
always free of care,
they go on amassing wealth.
¹³Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure
and have washed my hands in innocence.
¹⁴All day long I have been afflicted,
and every morning brings new punishments.
¹⁵If I had spoken out like that,
I would have betrayed your children.

¹⁶When I tried to understand all this,
it troubled me deeply
¹⁷till I entered the sanctuary of God;
then I understood their final destiny.
¹⁸Surely you place them on slippery ground;
you cast them down to ruin.
¹⁹How suddenly are they destroyed,
completely swept away by terrors!
²⁰They are like a dream when one awakes;
when you arise, Lord,
you will despise them as fantasies.
²¹When my heart was grieved
and my spirit embittered,
²²I was senseless and ignorant;
I was a brute beast before you.
²³Yet I am always with you;
you hold me by my right hand.
²⁴You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will take me
into glory.
²⁵Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire
besides you.
²⁶My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.
²⁷Those who are far from you will perish;
you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.
²⁸But as for me, it is good to be near God.
I have made the Sovereign LORD
my refuge;
I will tell of all your deeds.

TRANSFORMED BY THE TRUTH

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

1. Do you think devotion to God makes life better or worse? What have you observed and experienced that has shaped your perspective?
2. Read Psalm 73:3-14. Have you ever struggled with "the prosperity of the wicked"? If so, what did you see in their lives that was absent in yours? How did you make sense of the disparity?
3. Read Psalm 73:16-17 and 73:24. How does the reality of eternity affect the way you view your trials—and the good fortune of those who are far from God?
4. What becomes clear to you in "the sanctuary of God" (Psalm 73:17) that you tend to forget in the everyday challenges of life?
5. Read Psalm 73:23-28. Can you honestly say that earth has nothing you desire besides God (verse 25)? What do you think you would have to do to know and love God that passionately?