

Overcoming Our Envy of the Wicked

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[0:00] To begin with a bit of a quiz, then the first question is, what do you know about Psalm 73?! Brainstorm, what do you know about Psalm 73?

What do you want to know? I'm not particular. Just one thing. It's a good reminder of how we can envy the wicked, and then when God opens our eyes, we see how foolish we are.

As he says, as for me, my feet almost slipped, because I envy the wicked. Very good. What else? Maybe if some of you didn't know what Psalm 73 is about, that's a perfect description of what it's all about.

What else do you know about Psalm 73? The author is Asaph. Do you know what Asaph was? Who he was? What his job was?

Anyone? Stan? You look like you kind of know. No? Songwriter? He's a songwriter. Yes.

[1:09] He actually, that was his job. He was the worship leader in Israel. He led the priests. He wrote the psalms that were publicly sang.

How did he get out of the state of mind where he was envying the wicked?

Do you remember? He went to church. I went into the temple, and then, what did he see? Do you remember?

He saw the end of the wicked. Psalm 73, I think, is very potent. It's a very powerful psalm because it connects to all of our situation as Christians, as believers.

And, you know, it's not something I think that we live in, but there are times when it comes powerfully into our lives because we are tempted, just like Asaph was, to envy the wicked.

[2:11] To have our eyes set on the wrong things, and then what that creates in our own hearts is this confusion.

It creates this temptation to say, what's the point? Why am I even bothering to do this? Let me ask you, how are you tempted to feel?

How are you tempted to feel when you see the wicked prospering and yourself suffering in some way? I see the same as Asaph does.

The difference, though, is I fall in those tracks because I've got something where I'm right-handed. The Lord needs to tear it out. And I stop to think I'm being treated better than I deserve, but then I fall in that trap of envy when I'm struggling in some way.

But then the Lord recently opened my eyes and showed me I've got something far better than I am. We're going to talk about that later. But, yeah, there's that envy. How else are we tempted to feel?

[3:16] Or what else are we tempted to do in those situations? How are you tempted? Tempted to quit? That's very good.

Mark? Tempted to cut coral? Yeah. Very good. See, Asaph's situation isn't really unique to him. It's something that we all live in.

It's a common temptation that Satan has used for a long time. It's one of his many devices, his many schemes. Paul was talking to the church in Corinth about needing to forgive this man who was excommunicated.

And that man was now repenting. And in 2 Corinthians 2.11 he says that you need to restore this man. You need to patch this up.

You need to fix this and forgive him. In order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. Satan was working in that situation.

[4:18] And Paul said, now we can't let him outwit us. Because we are not unaware of his schemes. And so Satan is a liar. He is a schemer.

He has many devices, many traps. And Asaph nearly fell into one. Satan showed him the blessings of the sinful man. And then he showed him how free they are of affliction.

And it made his afflictions look really big. He painted that picture for Asaph. And Asaph nearly fell. And you and I have that same danger.

We have that same danger. It comes to us in different ways. It can come to us when we see the latest lottery winner. Or when we see our neighbor prospering.

We see it when every millionaire, godless athlete is celebrated and praised. We experience it when that sinful fellow worker.

[5 : 22] Who you know is a fraud. Who is not everything he says and thinks and pretends that he is. When he prospers and you don't. It's a trick.

It's a trap. It's a device. And it's a device that tempts us to say, what's the point? Why not sin? Why not just go on? Who cares? What's the point?

Thomas Brooks wrote in his book, Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices, precisely on this point. And this morning I'm going to take five remedies to this device.

If you want to read the book, it's in the library. It's five remedies. And they all begin with the word think. They all begin with the word think. Satan is trying to outwit us.

Why then does every remedy start with the word think? Renewed by our minds. Okay, we're renewed by our minds. Where's the battlefield in this temptation?

[6 : 24] In our minds. Satan is trying to outwit us. That's a function of our minds. And so each of the remedies is to meet Satan head on, meet the temptation head on with a new way of thinking.

And so each of these remedies begins with the word think. And so we have five of them. Number one then, think. Think. Nobody knows the heart of God toward a person by his outward blessings. No one knows the heart of God toward a person by his outward blessings. That is something that we need to think about when that happens. So what does it mean? It simply means you simply can't tell how God feels, his attitude, his disposition toward someone, based on whether they're experiencing blessing, outward blessing, or outward misery.

You can't really tell anything about a person or God's attitude towards a person based on those things. Can you give me some examples in the Bible? Job.

That was my first one. Job suffered. What was God's opinion of Job? He's upright. There's no one like him. Who else? From the Bible.

[7 : 41] Okay. Yeah. We're going to talk about this later. Pharaoh. God. God raised Pharaoh up. Pharaoh enjoyed this great prestige and honor and power.

And God said, I raised you up to throw you down. Lazarus. Lazarus. Okay. That's good. Explain. Well, there's the rich man.

He had everything now. And Lazarus died. But then we found out it was all for God's glory. And the rich man was saying, Please bring Lazarus.

He was a man of trouble. Yeah. So Lazarus, the rich man. Who else? Joseph. Joseph. Yep. Joseph went down into slavery.

But God was honoring him. God was using him to save. Who else? About the apostle Paul. Okay. Go on. Well, he thought he was doing the Lord a favor by persecuting.

[8 : 42] He was on his way down the road to Damascus. And then the Lord opened his eyes to show him what he was doing. Gene turned him completely around. Yeah. Yeah.

Who else? Or what? Another situation. Haman. Haman. I thought of him too. Explain. Well, he thought he had the king's favor. All things were working his way with the persecution of the Jews until the tables were turned.

And he ended up in the Haman. Yeah. Things were looking good for Haman. Everything was working out so well. Until you reach, what, Esther chapter 8.

And Haman is hanging from his own 70 foot gallows. How about Jesus? Who suffered like Jesus. And yet, God said, this is my son with him.

I am well pleased. I thought of Nebuchadnezzar. Actually, in his ascension and then in his fall, when God put him under that horrible situation, I think that was God's way of bringing Nebuchadnezzar back to his senses and hopefully to himself.

[9 : 55] You can think of an extreme example. Those are some biblical examples. Just think in history. Adolf Hitler, 1941. Poland was his. France was his. England was on the ropes.

Things were going great. He was the greatest leader of the strongest power in at least Europe. The world was at his fingertips.

But was that a reflection of God's attitude or disposition towards him? I know that's an extreme example. But I think we need to keep those things in mind. We can't tell what God's attitude towards someone is based on their blessings.

Okay, here's another example. And this looks at it from a different perspective. Does anyone remember how King Ahab died? King of Israel.

King Ahab married to Jezebel. Anyone? You're going to remember the story as soon as I start telling it. He died in battle. What was the circumstances, though?

[10 : 55] The random arrow. The random arrow, right? So here's King Ahab. King Ahab, king of Israel. He goes into battle disguised. So no one could recognize him.

So that no one would particularly aim at him. And you know what happened? An archer at random shot an arrow. And it flew through the air.

And it hit him and killed him. Now, was King Ahab good or bad? Bad. And it's easy for us to say, see, look at this wicked man.

Look at how he died. Now, let me ask you another question. Do you know how King Josiah died? Not nearly so famous.

I'll tell you how King Josiah died. King of Josiah, king of Judah went into battle disguised so no one could recognize him. The idea was that so no one would chase him in particular.

[11 : 57] And it would be safer that way. And an archer at random shot an arrow. And it flew through the air and killed Josiah. Their death was exactly the same.

They didn't die of a good old age. They died of a random arrow shot in battle. And the question is, did God feel the same way about both? No. King Ahab was wicked.

Josiah was righteous. So when Satan tempts us to think and say, what does it matter? Look how miserable I am. Look how good they have it. What does it matter?

Why can't I quit? And just we start to wallow in our envy. We need to think. God, you can't tell how God feels. His attitude towards someone based on outward blessings or outward miseries.

Second, well, let me continue on that one. Because I have one more point or one more idea that I want to put under that heading.

[12 : 59] And that is, it's so easy for us to fall into Satan's trap. Especially when it comes to money. When we see who has it and who doesn't.

But someone said this. And I think it's so insightful. I don't even know if this person was a believer. Because it comes from a number of sources.

But think. Think about this. When you're tempted to envy. And tempted to think they have it so good. Because they are so wealthy. Someone said, if you want to know what the Lord God thinks of money.

Just look at who he gives it to. You want to know what God thinks about money? Look at who he gives it to. God must not have a very high opinion of money.

Because look at who he gives it to. The most foolish. The most wicked people. He gives it to the biggest. Buffoons. You know.

[14 : 03] Just look at Hollywood. People that are just. Godless. Foolish. Wicked people. And they're loaded. To the gills. Do you think God is happy with them?

So that's remedy number one. Think. No man knows the heart of God. Toward a person by his outward blessing or misery. Number two. Think. Nothing provokes God to wrath.

Like taking his blessing. And using it for wickedness. Nothing provokes God to wrath. Like taking his blessing. And using it for wickedness. Now.

This. This idea. This theme. Isn't just found in one or two places in the Bible. It's. It's all over. Paul's writing to the Christians in Rome.

And. He's talking about the glory of God's saving grace. And the way. The way God comes and justifies us. And. There's no merit on our own.

[15 : 05] There's nothing that we did. It's not because of the obedience. Of the law. But it's all for Jesus sake. For his blood sake. That we're saved. And. Paul just keeps pushing us.

Pushing us. Into this. This idea of amazing grace. That it's not us. It's. It's not our law keeping. It's what Jesus has done. Our obedience has nothing to do with our standing.

Before God. And when. When we sin. He forgives us. And when we sin more. His grace abounds more. And when he gave the law. The law was added.

So that the trespasses might increase. But where. Where the trespasses increased. His. Increase. His grace increased all the more. And then. He pushes and pushes us. Until. The inevitable question. That comes to anyone's mind. Who's really tracking. What he's saying. Really. Coming to grips with it. Is. Well.

[16:03] Why not keep on sinning? If we sin. And that increases. God's glory. And God's grace. Then why not keep sinning? What was Paul's response to that?

Do you remember? By no means. God forbid. That's the furthest thing. You see. There's. When we turn grace. Into a license to sin. That. Brings us under the wrath of God. Nothing. Stirs up God's anger. Like taking his good things. And his good blessings. And then. Using them. To keep sinning. Romans 3. He said.

Why not say. As we are slanderously reported. As saying. Let us do evil. That good may result. And then he says. Their condemnation. Is deserved. When. We turn grace.

[16:58] Into a license. Of sin. That calls. Down upon us. The judgment. Of God. Or think of. The book of Hebrews. Or it says. How shall we escape.

If we ignore. Such a great salvation. And how much. More severely. Do you think. A man deserves. To be punished. Who has trampled. The son of God. Underfoot. Where there are. Great spiritual blessings. There is great. Responsibility. And when we ignore. Those blessings. And when we trampled. Them down. There is nothing. That provokes.

God's. Anger. Like that. Or Jesus. When he is speaking. To this. To the cities. Where he did. Most of his miracles. He said. Woe to you. Chorazin. Woe to you. Bethsaida. And you. Capernaum. Will you be lifted up. To the skies. No. It will be more bearable. For Sodom. On the day of judgment. Than for you. There is. Nothing. Offends.

[17:52] God's justice. And his wrath. Like taking his gifts. Whether they're spiritual. Or physical. And then using them. Against him.

And abusing them. Or what does Paul say? Do you show contempt. For the riches. Of his kindness. Tolerance. And patience. Not realizing.

That God's kindness. Leads you. Toward repentance. What is God? Why is God kind. To the wicked? What's the aim? Just read it?

What is he. What is he doing? What is he trying to do? To bring them to repentance. So God's goodness. To sinners.

Is meant to lead them. To repentance. To trust in him. To rejoice in him. To see that they need him. To seek him. But when wicked men. Turn that all on its head.

[18:50] They call down. The wrath of God. God's grace doesn't reduce. Our culpability. It doesn't reduce.

Our responsibility. It increases it. And so. Think when you see. Someone being physically. Blessed. Blessed. When they go on.

In their sin. That. Is. A warning cry. That's. That's a cry. Saying judge me. Condemn me. When they take God's blessing. And use it.

To sin. So let's think about that. Before we grow envious. Before we say. Well what's it matter? I've kept my heart. Pure in vain. The wicked are blessed.

Blessed. But their blessings. Are only. The rope. That God is going to hang them with. Their blessings. Will one day. Be a witness against them.

[19:46] At the great tribunal. All of heaven and earth. Will condemn. Condemn them. And so. The call is to think. Think about that.

So remedy three. That's remedy two. Remedy three is. Think. There's no. This is going to sound backward.

You're going to think that. I said it wrong. Think. There's no greater misery. Than not. To be afflicted. There's no greater misery. Than not.

To be afflicted. That sounds backwards. But it's so true. Satan tempts us to say. Look at them. They don't have any problems. God is blessing them.

They aren't sick. They aren't worried. They aren't afflicted. They just go on. In their sin. And God doesn't do anything. So why. Should holiness matter to me. Why should I.

[20:40] Keep trying so hard. But just think. There's no greater misery. Than not to be afflicted. In this world. Let me ask you a question.

You know. Joel Osteen's book. Your best life now. Your best life now. I haven't read it. But if this is your best life now. What does that mean for the rest of.

The next life. Where are you going? It's going to be worse. If this is your best life now. What's your next life going to be?

It's going to be hell. There's no greater misery. Than to. In this world. Not to be afflicted. If you're living your best life now.

Then you. Are to be pitying. More than any man. Romans 1. Talks about that. What does God do to people. In his wrath. In Romans chapter 1.

[21 : 38] What's the. The. In Romans chapter 1. He's talking about. People sinning. And then God's response. What is God's final response. In his wrath.

Towards sinners. In this world. He just. Gives them over. He says. Go. And you know what he'll do. He'll bless them. In their sin. And you know what that is. That's like gas. On the fire. And God just says. Here's more gas. And they just. Pour it on themselves.

He gives them over. He just lets them go. He keeps blessing them. He doesn't afflict them. And. They just walk. Further. And further. Away. Away from God.

Away from hope. Away from heaven. Away from salvation. They believe. A lie. And God just lets them go. They think God doesn't care.

[22 : 37] And so on they go. God is just giving them more rope. They're going to hang on. He's just letting them stay in the burning house.

He's just letting them walk closer and closer to the edge. And he doesn't say a word. So there's no greater danger. There's no greater misery. Than in this world. Not to be afflicted.

Because. What does God do to a child that he loves? He disciplines them. What do you do. When. To a child that you love.

When they're in danger. You stop them. You yell. You take extreme. Measures. You get their attention. You give them no rest. You spank them.

You afflict them. Because you love them. You stand in the way. You cause them pain. Because God disciplines the son he loves. And. So you do.

[23 : 33] Whatever. It takes. Even if it means causing pain. Because you love. That person. That child. And so. When God stops doing that.

It's a horrible thing. No greater misery. C.S. Lewis said. God whispers in our pleasures. And he speaks to us in our conscience.

But he shouts in our pains. When. When. When you have. Affliction and pain in your life. That is God shouting to you. It's. It's getting your attention.

It's calling you to himself. It's. He's. He's at work. So what a misery it is. For God. Not to speak to you anymore. Not to shout.

Not to whisper. But just to bless. And let you go on your way. The moment he stops shouting at you. The moment he just pours out blessing. Even when you're in your sin.

[24 : 33] Is the moment. When. All hope is lost. So do you see how Satan hides the hook. In the temptation.

He says. Look. There's no affliction there. But buried inside that bait. Is a hook. And on that hook. Is death. And on that hook. Is hell. And hopelessness.

And so. The call is to think. Not to just be driven. Not just to be tossed about. But to think. Don't be deceived.

By Satan's devices. Remedy number four. Think. Think about all the mercies. That you have.

That they don't have. Jim talked about this. Think about all the mercies. That you have. That they don't have. Yes.

[25 : 28] They enjoy great outward blessings. Asaph said that in Psalm 73. They have no struggles. Their bodies are healthy and strong.

They are free from the burdens common to man. They are not plagued by human ills. And it certainly does seem that way. Doesn't it sometimes. I think.

Asaph is being. It is a little jaded here. He doesn't see everything. But. He sees enough to say. To look at them and say. You know what.

I'm afflicted. And they're not. And the remedy is to think. Now. What do. What kind of blessings do I enjoy. That they don't have. How do these things balance.

How do they weigh on the scales. Listen. To Thomas Brooks. At this point. Their houses are safe from fear. This is talking about.

[26 : 25] The wicked. Their houses are safe from fear. Neither is the rod of God upon them. They send forth their little ones like a flock. And their children dance. They spend their days in wealth.

They have more than heart can wish. And they have no fear of death. Their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men. Yet all this is nothing. To what they lack.

They lack a saving interest in God. Christ. The spirit. The promises. The covenant of grace. And everlasting glory. They lack acceptance.

And reconciliation with God. They lack righteousness. Justification. Sanctification. Adoption. And redemption. They lack the pardon of sin.

And power against sin. And freedom from the dominion of sin. They lack that favor with God. Which is better than life. And that joy. Which is unspeakable.

[27 : 24] And full of glory. And that peace. That passes understanding. And that grace. That the least spark. Of which. Is worth more than heaven. And earth. They lack a house.

That has foundations. Whose builder. And maker is God. They lack those riches. That perish not. The glory. That doesn't fade. The kingdom. That doesn't shake.

Wicked men. Are the most needy men. In the world. So despite all of their riches. They are poor. In everything.

That counts. Amen. But you brothers and sisters. Even though you're afflicted. And tried. And you have problems. And there's always this temptation. To envy them. You are rich.

In everything that matters. That really does matter. God has made you rich. In Jesus Christ. And so you found favor. In his eyes. He found favor. In his eyes.

[28 : 19] And he calls you son. He calls you daughter. He calls you friend. Jesus calls you his brother. And his mercy. And his compassion. Are upon you.

And his reward. Is with him. And his recompense. Accompanies him. He is ready to bless you. And to bless you. And to bless you. Forever. And ever. And ever. And so. When Satan starts to say. It doesn't matter. What you do. Or just keep looking at them. Keep looking at them. Well look at them. They have it good.

And you don't. But think. You are rich. And everything that matters. And your riches. Cannot be taken away. And their riches. Are going to be taken from them. And see how poor they really are. That's remedy number four. You have to think. You have to compare. Your riches. Versus their riches. Which of them. Are greater. Remedy number five. This is the last one.

[29 : 20] Think about why. Think. Think about why. God. Is heaping mercies on the wicked. Why is God doing this? We've kind of hinted at this before.

But why is God doing this? If you aren't there. Go to Psalm 73. Psalm 73. Mark Aikens.

Can you read. Verses 16 through 20. When I tried to understand all this. It was oppressive to me.

While I entered the sanctuary of God. Then I understood your final destiny. Surely you placed them on slippery ground. And cast them down to ruin.

How suddenly are they destroyed. Completely struck away by terrorists. As a dream when one wakes. So when you arise. So Lord. You will disguise them.

[30 : 19] As men. What does God do. After he raises the wicked. And exalts the wicked. He puts them on slippery ground.

Then what? Suddenly they're destroyed. He destroys them. Why does God lift them up?

To destroy them. One of the most. Dramatic. Moves in wrestling. Whether it's fake. Or whether it's real.

Is. The body slam. Okay. What happens in a body slam? One wrestler is. Picked up overhead. He's raised as high as he could be.

He gets a good view of the audience. Everyone's looking at him. But then he's thrown down. It's dramatic. Because a man is lifted up.

[31 : 20] He's raised up as high as he can go. And then he is. Thrown down. Why does God raise the wicked. And lift them high. And fill them with mercies. So all men are looking upon them.

And all men are. Gazing at wonder. Because it makes their ruin. All the more dramatic. Proverbs 16. 4. The Lord works out everything.

For his own ends. Even the wicked. For the day of disaster. What is God doing. With the wicked. He's working out their end.

Even the day of disaster. God lifts the wicked up. To throw them down. Dan. Daniel Hopkins talked about Pharaoh. Listen to Exodus 9. 16. But I have raised you up.

For this very purpose. That I might show you my power. And that my name. Might be proclaimed. In all the earth. And what did he do to Pharaoh?

[32:20] Threw him down. God raised Pharaoh. To show his power. In destroying him. Now. Who. In their right. Mind. Would want to be raised up.

If that was what's going to. What was going to be. What was going to happen to them. Who in their right mind. Would say yes. Body slammed me. Because I want everyone. To look at me.

I want to be high. High up in the air. Who would. In their right mind. Want to be exalted. If that's what was going to happen. Who would want to go higher.

In this world. Enjoy. More in this world. If it meant losing everything. In the next. Isn't that what we learned. With Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man had everything. But.

In a second. He is in hell. He's begging for a drop of water. Would you trade the rich man. Places. And so.

[33:18] How should we pray. How should we think. We should pray. Lord. Let me be little in this world. So I can be great in the next.

Lord. Keep me humble. In this world. So that I can be exalted. In the next. Let me be low now. That I might live with you.

Forever. So brothers and sisters. Satan comes tricking. And he comes deceiving. He paints the world. He paints vanity fair. He paints it in beautiful colors.

And he says. Now look. Look at that. And we. Start to envy. But it's all a trick. And we're not ignorant of his devices. So.

God's word puts things right. God's word shows us. Satan's life. Or what it is. And so. Let us believe it. The obedience. And the power.

[34:17] To overcome Satan's temptation. Is going to be coming. As we believe his promise. As we believe his word. As we embrace what God has said. To us. And so. Let's believe it then.

And not. Be outwitted. We have. One more minute. Are there any. Questions or comments. I think of Psalm 73. I think what. Asap. But as to me.

It is good in your God. Yeah. I have made the sovereign Lord. My good. I will tell of all your deeds. Hmm. One of my favorite verses. Mark.

Hmm. I think the ultimate picture. That lesson is in Revelation 18. Hmm. Talks about the following. Hmm.

Hmm. Hmm. Because it mentions. All the nations are drunk. They're having lack. They're adulteries. The kings of the earth. They're adultery.

[35:12] They're hurt. And the merchants of the earth. They're rich. They're excessive. Hmm. Like you said. The Lord just. Was.

Piling on the luxuries. And the. And the good things. Like you said. The rich man. The rich man. The rich man was in hell. And life. You have all the things.

Hmm. And now. Lazarus. Is blessed. And you are where you are. Hmm. Hmm. Total reversal.

Hmm. Very good.

Yes. I'm thinking in our current American culture, how crucial it is for our kids to understand the same thing. We have a very good age. We see what the friends have or see what the sport fingers get, but we're successful.

We're going to understand it, parents, if you live that out. If you live for the American dream, they will too.

[36:19] So, with your mouth and with your actions, show them that Babylon is not the world and the city to live for, but there is a coming city whose builder and foundations are built by God, and it's going to last forever.

Well, we are dismissed. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.