

Such deep questions cause one to question the moral order of the universe. After all, one asks, what good is there in being good? If the wicked enjoy the same prosperity as the **pure in heart**, then what is the reward of godliness?

“If God is in control of things, the plans of the wicked should flounder. They should even be punished openly. The godly alone should prosper. But that is not what Asaph saw, and it is not what we see either. We see scoundrels getting rich. Utterly degenerate persons, like particularly vile rock musicians or movie stars, are well paid and sought after. Even criminals get rich selling their crime stories.” (Boice)

For there are no pangs in their death: Perhaps Asaph had seen some of the wicked die agonizing and painful deaths; but he had seen enough wicked people die peaceful deaths to make him say, “**there are no pangs in their death.**”

“He fell asleep like a child,’ say his friends; and others exclaim, ‘He was so happy, that he must be a saint.’ Ah! This is but their apparent end. God knoweth that the dying repose of sinners is but the awful calm which heralds the eternal hurricane.” (Spurgeon)

We appreciate the poetic power of Asaph’s description. We see the wicked man with an ostentatious **necklace of pride**. He is covered with an impressive **garment**, but that covering is **violence** toward others. He is so filled with good food that his **eyes bulge with abundance**, and he has **more than heart could wish**. His mouth always scoffs and speaks **wickedly**, and his **mouth is set...against the heavens**. Worst of all, **everyone** seems to hear about this wicked man and his prosperity, because it seems as if his **tongue walks through the earth**.

Their eyes bulge with abundance: “By fatness,

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“GOD KNOWETH THAT THE DYING REPOSE OF SINNERS IS BUT THE AWFUL CALM WHICH HERALDS THE ETERNAL HURRICANE.” - SPURGEON

or corpulency, the natural lines of the face are *changed*, or rather *obliterated*. The characteristic distinctions are gone; and we see little remaining besides the *human hog*.” (Clarke)

For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning: Asaph felt that his life was much more difficult than the life of the ungodly man. While the wicked man enjoyed all his wealth and ease and pride, Asaph had to endure being **plagued** and **chastened**, and he had to endure it **all day long** and **every morning**.

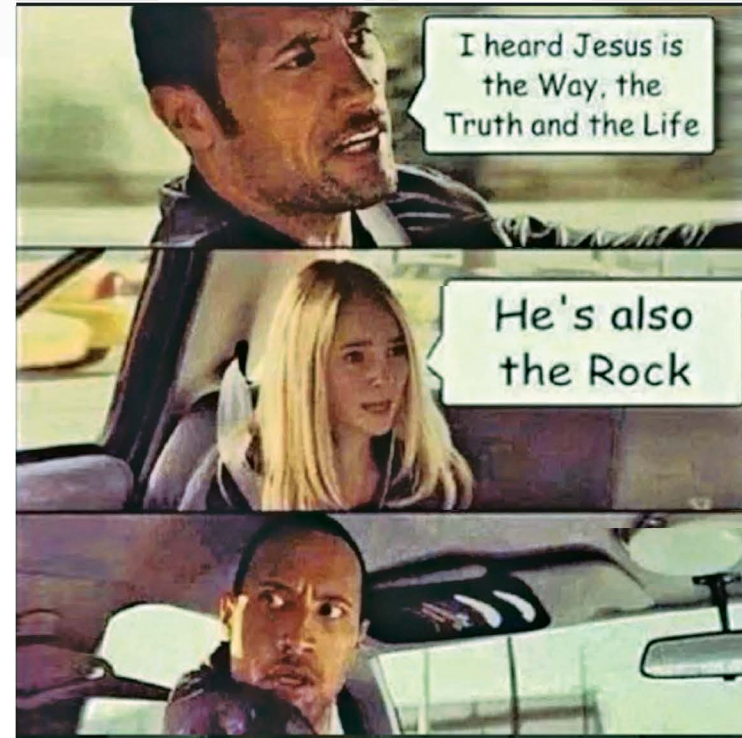
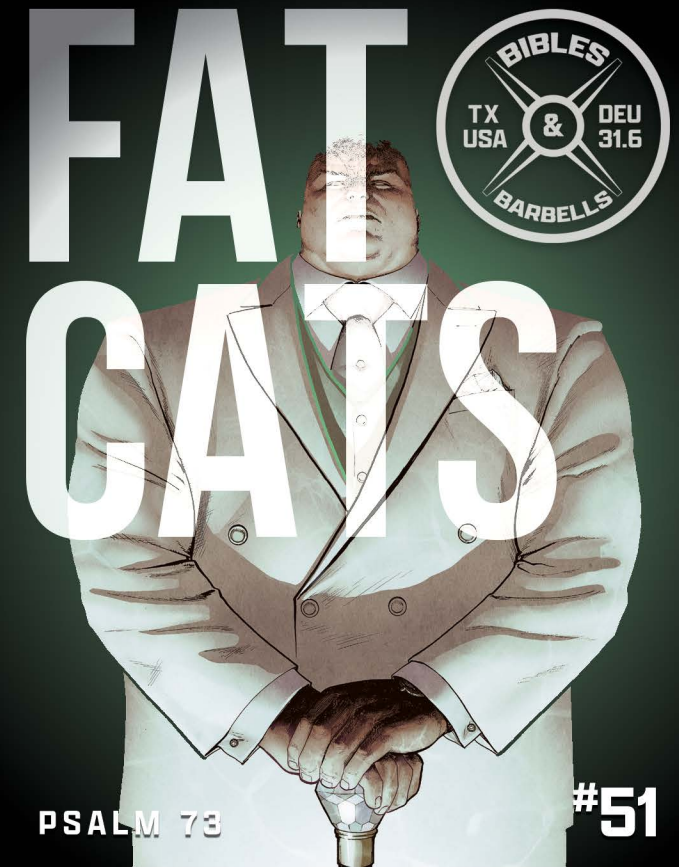
Until I went into the sanctuary of God: The crisis seemed to build and build for Asaph, **until** he went into the house of the Lord. There he gained a perspective on his problem that he did not have before. There he was able to see things from an eternal viewpoint, and he then **understood their end**.

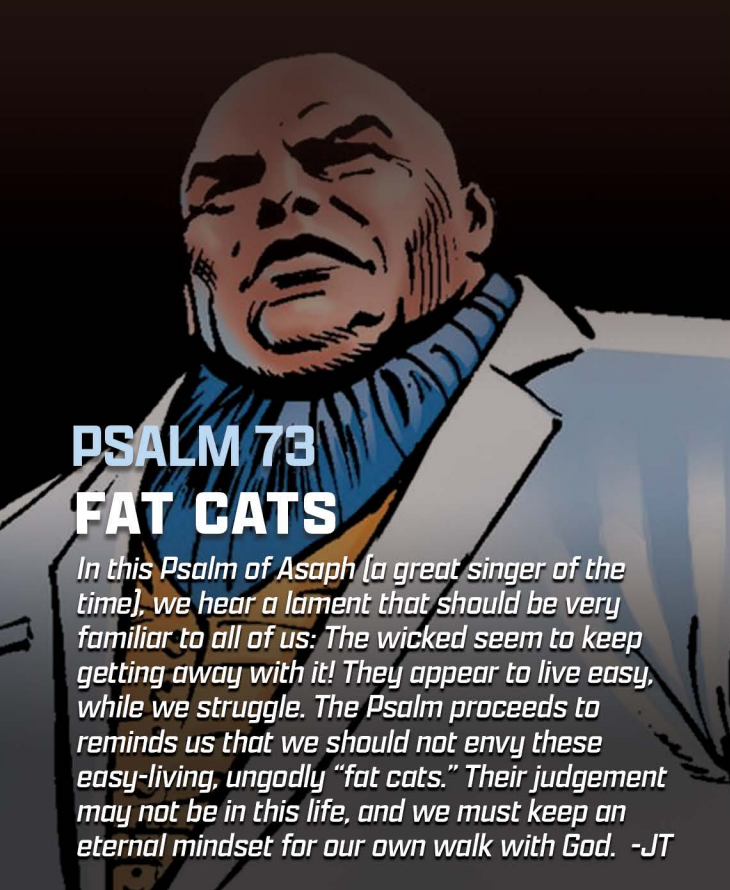
What did going to the house of God do for Asaph? There, he could gain understanding in several ways.

- By prayer and worship in the sanctuary, he understood that God was at the center of all things, and he gained a fresh appreciation of both God and eternity.
- By hearing the word of God in the sanctuary, he understood that there was a truth that went beyond what he saw and experienced in everyday life.
- By observing sacrifice at the sanctuary, he understood that God takes sin so seriously that it must be judged and atoned for, even if it is by an innocent victim who stands in the place of the guilty by faith.

This is one of God’s great purposes in establishing a place where His people come to meet with Him. It is never to imply that there is only one or only a few places where man can meet with God, or that they must be ornate or glorious buildings. It is to emphasize that it is good to have a place separate from other places where we focus on a heavenly, eternal perspective.

Whom have I in heaven but You? This is the beautiful expression of a longing heart for God and for eternity. Intellectually, Asaph probably understood that there was much for him in heaven. There were angels and dwelling places and streets of gold and the companionship of the people of God throughout all generations. Yet all of that paled in the light of the presence of God.





PSALM 73 FAT CATS

In this Psalm of Asaph (a great singer of the time), we hear a lament that should be very familiar to all of us: The wicked seem to keep getting away with it! They appear to live easy, while we struggle. The Psalm proceeds to remind us that we should not envy these easy-living, ungodly "fat cats." Their judgement may not be in this life, and we must keep an eternal mindset for our own walk with God. -JT

- 1 Truly God is good to Israel,
to those whose hearts are pure.
- 2 But as for me, I almost lost my footing.
My feet were slipping, and I was almost gone.
- 3 For I envied the proud
when I saw them prosper despite their wickedness.
- 4 They seem to live such painless lives;
their bodies are so healthy and strong.
- 5 They don't have troubles like other people;
they're not plagued with problems like everyone else.
- 6 They wear pride like a jeweled necklace
and clothe themselves with cruelty.
- 7 These fat cats have everything
their hearts could ever wish for!
- 8 They scoff and speak only evil;
in their pride they seek to crush others.
- 9 They boast against the very heavens,
and their words strut throughout the earth.

- 10 And so the people are dismayed and confused,
drinking in all their words.
- 11 "What does God know?" they ask.
"Does the Most High even know what's happening?"
- 12 Look at these wicked people—
enjoying a life of ease while their riches multiply.
- 13 Did I keep my heart pure for nothing?
Did I keep myself innocent for no reason?
- 14 I get nothing but trouble all day long;
every morning brings me pain.
- 15 If I had really spoken this way to others,
I would have been a traitor to your people.
- 16 So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper.
But what a difficult task it is!
- 17 Then I went into your sanctuary, O God,
and I finally understood the destiny of the wicked.
- 18 Truly, you put them on a slippery path
and send them sliding over the cliff to destruction.
- 19 In an instant they are destroyed,
completely swept away by terrors.
- 20 When you arise, O Lord,
you will laugh at their silly ideas
as a person laughs at dreams in the morning.
- 21 Then I realized that my heart was bitter,
and I was all torn up inside.
- 22 I was so foolish and ignorant—
I must have seemed like a senseless animal to you.
- 23 Yet I still belong to you;
you hold my right hand.
- 24 You guide me with your counsel,
leading me to a glorious destiny.
- 25 Whom have I in heaven but you?
I desire you more than anything on earth.
- 26 My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak,
but God remains the strength of my heart;
he is mine forever.
- 27 Those who desert him will perish,
for you destroy those who abandon you.
- 28 But as for me, how good it is to be near

God!

I have made the Sovereign Lord my shelter,
and I will tell everyone about the wonderful things you do.

BlueLetterBible.org Commentary

The title of this psalm (**A Psalm of Asaph**) tells us that it was written by the great singer and musician of David and Solomon's era (1 Chronicles 15:17-19, 16:5-7, 25:6). 1 Chronicles 25:1 and 2 Chronicles 29:30 add that Asaph was a prophet in his musical compositions.

This wonderful psalm may be best understood by the dominant pronouns within. When Asaph is troubled by the fate of the ungodly (verses 1-12), the dominant pronoun is *they*. When he describes his own frustrated thinking leading to the resolution (verses 13-17), the dominant pronoun is *I*. When he finds resolution of the problem (verses 18-22), the dominant pronoun is *You*, in the sense of God. When He proclaims the assurance of his faith and fellowship with God (verses 23-28), the dominant pronouns are a mixture of *You* and *I*.

But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled: Asaph knew what he said about God in the first verse was true; yet there was another truth that disturbed him greatly. It made him **almost** stumble; it made his **steps** nearly slip. "It shows that having doubts like Asaph's is not incompatible with responsible Christian living. It may have been true, as he says, that his feet 'had almost slipped.' But they had not actually slipped, or at least they had not slipped so far as to make him forget his responsibilities as a leader of God's people." (Boice)

For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked: Asaph saw the same troubling evidence that many see every day in their own lives. Many people cannot deny that God is good to them; but it also seems that God is good — perhaps too good — to the **boastful** and the **wicked**. It is then easy to envy the wicked and their **prosperity**.