

Psalm 73

- But as for me, it is good to be near God -

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Introduction

- ❖ Why do even Christians admire powerful and rich people, who seem to be healthy and wealthy, and make use of lies and violence, who scoff at God, and are corrupt in many ways? This Psalm shows the struggles of a believer, who envied these men and almost slipped away.
 - Kraus comments: “The entire visible world is (seems to be; EH) a single contradiction against the righteous God.”¹
- ❖ Psalm 73 belongs to the didactic psalms, conveying personal wisdom and faith.
 - “Like Psalms 37 and 49, this psalm is a wisdom psalm, designed to instruct the reader about certain basic questions relating to belief in God as a God of justice. The need for this instruction arises from the fact that those who had disobeyed God’s laws had not been punished as the psalmist felt they should have been. Toombs describes the psalm as ‘a journey from the dark night of doubt to the dawn of faith.’”²
 - “Psalm 73 does not contain a theoretical doctrinal essay on the ‘retribution,’ on the ‘question of the theodicy,’ or on the ‘moral world order.’ Here a human being tells us how he was under threat of losing confidence in the perfection of Yahweh’s goodness vis-à-vis the צדיקים (the pure in heart). The basic character of the narrative is exhibited explicitly in v. 28*. We are dealing with narrative doctrine.”³
- ❖ Psalm 73 consists of three parts and an introductory statement of faith.

¹ Kraus, H.-J. (1993, p. 92).

² Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991, p. 632).

³ Kraus, H.-J. (1993, p. 87).

- Profession of Faith (verse 1)
 - The first part (verse 2-14) describes the unease the God due to jealousy.
 - The second part (verse 15-22) describes the quest for answers and the search for peace with God.
 - The third part (verse 23-28) describes the peace with God found.
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Book of Psalms. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

Context

- ❖ The historical context of Psalm 73 is not known. This is not necessary. The writer describes feelings and thoughts.....
- ❖ The Book of Psalms belongs to the Wisdom literature. Psalm 73 is part of the third book of Psalms (Psalm 73-89).
 - Psalm 73-83 and Psalm 50 are ascribed to Asaph.
 - The theme of Psalm 73 stands in the tradition of Psalm 1.

Form and structure

- ❖ Psalm 73 consists of a profession of faith and three main parts.
 - Profession of Faith (verse 1)
 - The first part (verse 2-14) describes the unease with faith in God due to jealousy.
 - The second part (verse 15-22) describes the quest for answers and the search for peace with God.
 - The third part (verse 23-28) describes the peace with God found.

<i>superscript</i>	A psalm of Asaph.
Profession of faith	
<i>(verse 1)</i>	1. Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.
PART 1: Personal Unease with Faith in God	
But as for me: Jealousy	
<i>Looking back</i>	2. But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;

<i>(verse 2, 3)</i>	<p>I had nearly lost my foothold.</p> <p>3. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.</p>
The Prosperity of the Wicked	
	<p>4. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong.</p> <p>5. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills.</p> <p>6. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence.</p> <p>7. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits.</p> <p>8. They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression.</p> <p>9. Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth.</p>
<i>Admiration and Scoffing (verse 10, 11)</i>	<p>10. Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance.</p> <p>11. They say, "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?"</p>
<i>Summary (verse 12)</i>	<p>12. This is what the wicked are like— always carefree, they increase in wealth.</p>
I am Embittered	
<i>(verse 13, 14)</i>	<p>13. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence.</p> <p>14. All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning.</p>
PART 2 – The Search for Peace with God	
The Quest for Understanding	
<i>Reflections - 1 (verse 15-17)</i>	<p>15. If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed your children.</p> <p>16. When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me</p> <p>17. till I entered the sanctuary of God;</p>

	then I understood their final destiny.
The Future State of the Wicked	
<i>Reflections - 2 (verse 18-20)</i>	<p>18. Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin.</p> <p>19. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors!</p> <p>20. As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies.</p>
I have been Embittered	
<i>Reflections - 3 (verse 21, 22)</i>	<p>21. When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered,</p> <p>22. I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.</p>
Part 3. Finding Peace with God	
I am always with you	
<i>Restored Faith (verse 23-26)</i>	<p>23. Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand.</p> <p>24. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.</p> <p>25. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.</p> <p>26. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.</p>
The wicked will perish	
<i>(verse 27)</i>	27. Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.
But as for me: it is good to be near God	
<i>The present (verse 28)</i>	28. But 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.

Recurring words

- ❖ **“But as for me”**: verse 2 and 28; The same word occurs also in verse 22 23, and has an emphatic force.
- ❖ **“Is good”**: verse 1 and 28;
- ❖ **“Surely”**: verse 1, 13, 18;
- ❖ **“Heart”**: verse 1, 7 (NIV: minds”), 13, 21, 26 (2);

Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

Historical setting

- ❖ The historical setting is unknown.

Parallellismus membrorum

- ❖ Parallellismus membrorum is a special feature of Biblical literature, especially of the Old Testament Wisdom Literature, i.e. The Book of Job, Psalms and Proverbs. It “is also present, although less prominent, in biblical prose. It can be defined as the repetition of the same or related semantic content and/or grammatical structure in consecutive lines or verses.”⁴
- ❖ There are several forms of parallellismus membrorum found in this Psalm:
 - Synonymous parallelism.
 - Two (or three, or four) lines express the same thought. Verse 4 and 5 is an example. Line 1.b and 2.b state the same thought, positively (1.b) and negatively (2.b):
 1. They have no struggles;
their bodies are healthy and strong.
 2. They are free from the burdens common to man;
they are not plagued by human ills.
 - Syntactical parallelism
 - The second line completes the first line (verse 2):
 1. (but as for me,) my feet had almost slipped;
 2. I had nearly lost my foothold.
 - Verse 9 is a nice example of the combination of heaven + earth (see also verse 25):

⁴ See for more information: Berlin, A. (1992). *Parallelism*. In D. N. Freedman (Ed.)(Vol. 5, p. 155).

1. Their mouths **lay claim to heaven,**
 2. and their tongues **take possession of the earth.**
- An example of four lines is found in verse 23 and 24, whereby line 1 and 4, and 2 and 3 are pairs.
 1. **Yet I am always with you;**
 2. **you hold me by my right hand.**
 3. **You guide me with your counsel,**
 4. **and afterward you will take me into glory.**
 - Antithetical parallelism
 - The second line contrasts the first line (verse 26):
 1. **My flesh and my heart may fail,**
 2. **but God is the strength of my heart**
and my portion forever.

Word Study

- ❖ “heart”, “minds” = “לֵבָב”⁵: **conscience**.
 - 2. the *inner man*, indef. the *soul*, **comprehending mind, affections and will**.⁶
 - It can be pure (verse 1, 13), callous (verse 7), it can be grieved (verse 21) and fail (verse 26), and God is the strength of the heart (verse 26).
- ❖ “good” = “טוֹב”⁷:
 - 2. **pleasant, desirable** (verse 28);
 - 6. **friendly, kind** (verse 1).⁷

Remark

- ❖ There are some textual variants found in this Psalm. The text of verse 10 line 2 is uncertain. This will not be discussed in this outline.

Exposition

⁵ Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M. E. J., & Stamm, J. J. (1994–2000, p. 516).

⁶ Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (1977, p. 523).

⁷ Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M. E. J., & Stamm, J. J. (1994–2000, p. 370, 371).

A psalm of Asaph.

- ❖ This Psalm conveys personal experiences and wisdom.
- ❖ The main message is: “**But as for me, it is good to be near God.**”
- ❖ Asaph invites us to draw close to God: “I will tell all of your deeds” (verse 28).

Verse 1 *The statement of faith*

- ❖ “**Surely.**” This is an affirmation with emphasis. This emphasis stands in contrast with the following passage in which the writer describes his envy.
- ❖ “**God is good to Israel.**” This is an open statement. His goodness doesn’t necessarily result in prosperity, health, financial wealth but in “**kindness.**” This kindness is given to the ones who are pure in heart.
 - This kindness is described in verse 23-26, 28: living in the presence of God, his guidance, his strength, the future glory.
 - This kindness is based on the salvific acts of God, in the past, and the present.
- ❖ “**pure in heart**” means a heart devoted to God. It doesn’t imply a heart without sin. It does imply a heart that longs for forgiveness and cleansing of the heart (Ps 51).
- ❖ “**who are pure in heart**” stands in opposition to the “wicked” and “arrogant”, who are “unfaithful” to God (verse 27).
- ❖ While reading this Psalm, one must be aware of the thought of verse 1.
- ❖ Kraus comments: “Psalm 73 does not contain a theoretical doctrinal essay on the ‘retribution,’ on the ‘question of the theodicy,’ or on the ‘moral world order.’ Here a human being tells us how he was under threat of losing confidence in the perfection of Yahweh’s goodness vis-à-vis the צדיקים (pure in heart). The basic character of the narrative is exhibited explicitly in v. 28. **We are dealing with narrative doctrine.**”⁸

Part 1 (verse 2-14)

Verse 2-3 *Jealousy*

- ❖ “**But as for me**” stands in opposition to “**who are pure in heart.**”
- ❖ “**My feet had almost slipped**” I almost joined the wicked in their schemes, striving for wealth.
 - “**It did not happen!**” Yahweh did not let him fall! In this, he has let his goodness shine in the midst of all dangers, of which the psalm will now speak.”⁹
- ❖ “**my foothold**” is my faith in God (verse 23-26, 28).

⁸ Kraus, H.-J. (1993, p. 87).

⁹ Kraus, H.-J. (1993, p. 87).

- ❖ **“the arrogant”** and **“wicked.”** The writer doesn’t call them wicked because of their wealth, but because of their pride and violence (verse 6), their iniquity and evil conceits (verse 7), their scoffing and threatening oppression (verse 8). Their scoffing culminates in “How can God know?” “Does the Most High have knowledge?” (verse 11).
 - “Life can be very difficult for the godly. At times they seem to get nowhere and are provoked to anger and jealousy. Negative emotions are there but must be dealt with. **The psalmist readily and publicly admits his error.** He ‘envied the arrogant.’”¹⁰
- ❖ **“the prosperity”** = **“shalom”** this prosperity is described in verse 4, 5 and 12.

Verse 4-12 *The prosperity of the wicked*

- ❖ This passage is carefully crafted. It starts with the observation of the health and wealth of the wicked. Then it describes the arrogance of the wicked and the admiration by their followers, despite their corruption and claim to power, expressed in two exclamations.
- ❖ The prosperity of the wicked is described in verse 4 and 5. See also Ecclesiastes 7:15.
 - Prosperity as such is not the problem but it leads to:
 - Pride and violence. They adorn themselves even with pride and violence (verse 6).
 - **“From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits”** (verse 7).
 - VanGemeren comments: “The phrase ‘evil conceits’ (*maškiyôt*, “image,” v. 7) usually denotes images of idols. Here it has the metaphorical sense of ‘imagination.’ **The hearts of the wicked are full of imaginations or schemings, by which they seem to succeed and prosper.**”¹¹
- ❖ When they are criticized because of their behaviour, they:
 - Scoff and speak with malice.
 - They threaten with oppression (verse 8).
 - **POWER AND WEALTH OFTEN LEAD TO CORRUPTION.**
- ❖ As a result, they:
 - claim power over heaven and earth, therewith denying the power of God (verse 9).
- ❖ Their followers admire them (verse 10).
 - The text of line 2 is uncertain. A possible meaning might be the following. Their followers and admirers are impressed by the health and wealth of the wicked and

¹⁰ VanGemeren, W. A. (2008, Vol. 5, p. 560).

¹¹ VanGemeren, W. A. (2008, Vol. 5, p. 561).

hope to still their thirst for wealth by supporting these men who claim to have power.

- This explanation is derived from today’s observations that people support wealthy and healthy political leaders who have proven to be corrupt. Their supporters, often belonging to the poorer classes, support these leaders by their votes.
- ❖ **“They”** are the “arrogant” and “wicked.” They scoff (verse 11):
 - **“How can God know?”**
“Does the Most High have knowledge?”
 - They think: we can do what we want and God doesn’t intervene. This is the supreme mockery. They deny God knowledge and the power to intervene.
 - VanGemerren comments: “They do not deny the existence of God but limit him in his knowledge and wisdom. From their perspective God is only concerned with religion, piety, and good deeds and does not punish those who by their own schemings and plottings take advantage of business and political opportunities. The questions of whether and how God knows imply strong, negative responses: ‘God does not know!’ and ‘The Most High [Elyon] has no knowledge!’ **The confidence of the wicked enticed many who did not have strong convictions.**”¹²
- ❖ Verse 12 is a summarizing and concluding verse.

Verse 13-14

- ❖ Part 1 started with envy (verse 3). The result is, as it is described in verse 21 and 22:
 - **“When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.”**
 - This embittered spirit is clear:
 - “Surely **in vain** have I kept my heart pure; **in vain** have I washed my hands in innocence.”
 - **“Keeping his heart ‘pure’ was an expression of concern for justice and righteousness.”**¹³
 - There is a sharp contrast between verse 1 and verse 13 and 14:

Verse 1	Verse 13, 14
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¹² VanGemerren, W. A. (2008, Vol. 5, p. 562).

¹³ VanGemerren, W. A. (2008, Vol. 5, p. 563).

<p>Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.</p>	<p>Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure in vain have I washed my hands in innocence.</p>
<p><i>God is good to Israel?</i></p>	<p><i>All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning.</i></p>

- Why don't I experience shalom? Asaph might have asked. Why do I have to suffer that much?

Part 2 (verse 15-22)

Verse 15-17 Reflections 1

❖ "If I had said, 'I will speak thus'"

- The writer has expressed his thoughts and feelings. His feet had almost slipped (verse 2). But this was not the end of his reflections. After he professed that his spirit was embittered, he returned to God.

❖ "I would have betrayed your children."

- Just as the wicked have their admirers, Asaph felt his responsibilities towards the community of the children of God, he was serving. He is a wise man. Other people have themselves entrusted to his wisdom and teachings. What would have happened to them, if his feet had slipped? They too would have lost their foothold. Their feet would have slipped too.

❖ "When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me."

- The main question remains. Why are the wicked prosperous? Why doesn't God punish them when they mock at God? Why do people admire them, while they can touch their corruption, see their malice thoughts? Why do I, while I'm trying to keep my heart pure and being punished in the morning at the same time.
- It was oppressive to me. These questions were a burden. "All intellectual exertions are hopelessly shattered."¹⁴

❖ "till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny."

- The "sanctuary" is not specified. Historically speaking, Asaph could not refer to the temple, which was built by King Solomon. It is not necessary to be specific about the sanctuary. Asaph was near God. See also Psalm 27:4, 63:2, 68:35, 77:13.

¹⁴ Kraus, H.-J. (1993, p. 89).

- At that time, he realised that wicked would never find themselves in the presence of God if they do not repent. Not during their lifetime, not when they have died and their bodies are being left to decay.
- This final destiny is explained in the following verses. (Also Psalm 37:35-38.)
 - Psalm 37:37 shows the opposite thought: “Consider the blameless, observe the upright; there is a future for the man of peace.”
 - Ecclesiastes 8:12, 13: “Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God. Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.”

Verse 18-20 Reflections 2

- ❖ **“Surely.”** The third emphatic affirmation. It conveys strong emotions.
- ❖ **“you place them on slippery ground;”**
 - This is one of those texts where the believer is trying to understand the relation between men’s responsibility and God’s sovereignty, his decrees and actions.
 - **“The wicked”** choose to live this way, healthy and wealthy, not honouring God, but scoffing, threatening with oppression...
 - **“God”** placed them on slippery ground. The ground they are standing on (living on) looks promising. But, in the end, they will perish.
- ❖ **“You cast them down to ruin.”**

This will be done in a split second. “How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors!”

- **“As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies.”** Asaph made use of strong images.

Verse 21-22 Reflections 3

- ❖ **“When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered.”**
 - This resulted in the exclamations of verse 13 and 14.
 - He compares his behaviour with ignorance and acting like a beast.

Part 3 (verse 23-28)

Verse 23-26

- ❖ Asaph is again assured of his faith in God, living in communion with God.
- ❖ The Lord will guide him by his council and take him by the right hand.
 - See also Psalm 16:7; 25:9; 32:8; 48:14; Isaiah 48:17.
- ❖ Instead of a ruin (verse 17), heavenly glory awaits him.

- In the Old Testament, there are not many references found, referring to the heavenly glory after death! Compare Genesis 5:24, where the same words have been used.
- ❖ The contrast between verse 25 and verse 9 is very clear:

The wicked (verse 9)	The pure in heart – Asaph (verse 25)
Their mouths lay claim to heaven , and their tongues take possession of the earth .	Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

- ❖ And finally, whatever might happen to me, God is the strength of my heart.

Verse 27

- ❖ **“Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.”**
 - **“far from you”**. During their lifetime, the wicked were mocking at God. They adorned themselves with pride and violence. After their lifetime, they will continue to stay far from God. They can take nothing from their wealth with them into the grave. Their bodies and bones will perish. It is the plain truth, the naked truth, if we will like it or not.

Verse 28

- ❖ **“But as for me.”** The third affirmation with emphasis and emotion. Compare verse 28 with verse 2 and 3 in connection with verse 1:

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.	
But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.	But 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.

- ❖ Finally:
 - A comparison

The wicked	The pure in heart - Asaph
Apart from God – the unfaithful	Near God- the faithful

Prosperity	
No struggles, healthy and strong Free from burdens	I have been plagued I have been punished
Pride, violence Callous hearts – iniquity Evil conceits – minds	God takes him by the right hand Guidance by God
Scoffing Threatening oppression	Praise
Slippery ground	A foothold
The end	The end
Ruin Destruction Vanishing as a dream	Glory

- This theme is also addressed in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31).

Application

Praise

- ❖ Praise God, who guides us, counsels us.
 - He is our strength. He is our foothold and refuge. He will take the believer into glory (Rom 8:18,19)
 - Wilcock writes: “In verses 23–24 a sermon outline leaps off the page—Grasped, Guided, Glorified!”¹⁵
- ❖ Praise God, because of His grace and peace, which makes it possible to draw near and stay in the presence of God.
 - VanGemerren comments: “He (Asaph) nearly failed, but God sustained him and kept him close to himself. That is grace!”¹⁶
- ❖ Praise God for his glory.

¹⁵ Wilcock, M. (2001, Vol. 2, p. 8).

¹⁶ VanGemerren, W. A. (2008, Vol. 5, p. 560).

- “The glory of God affects one’s whole way of life as one lives in the joy of God’s love, mercy, patience, grace, and forgiveness. But hope extends beyond this life to the future, when God will take care of all of his children’s needs.

The joy of fellowship with God as experienced in his protection and guidance is so intense that the psalmist bursts out a rhetorical question (v. 25).¹⁷

❖ Praise Christ:

- “The church of the new covenant reads and understands the psalm in view of the fact that Jesus Christ is the ‘place’ of God’s presence (v. 28*), with whom and in whom the reality of divine grace and divine judgment is obvious. He himself is the turn, he himself is the ‘final one,’ through whom all opinions of faith and life won from the visible world are overturned. In him the Christian experiences the miracle of communion with God, which overcomes all affliction, yes, even death (Rom. 8:35–39*).¹⁸

I tried to understand all this

- ❖ This Psalm teaches the reader to try to understand the major questions of life, even if these questions seem to be oppressive and frightening.
- ❖ This Psalm opens the eye for today’s reality. Power and wealth lead to corruption, false pride, lies, oppression and violence.
 - And still, ordinary people support corrupt leaders.
- ❖ The same theme is addressed in Psalm 37:
 - “Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away” (Ps 37: 1, 2).
- ❖ The destiny of the wicked is one of destruction. This Psalm is not meant to give the believer a superior feeling over the wicked. It is rather the opposite. The believer must be awe-stricken, because of their chosen fate.
 - They were striving for health and wealth apart from God. They were scoffing at God. In the end, when they die, they will harvest what they have sown, decay apart from God, not sharing the glory with God.
- ❖ “In the light of the reality of God, ‘something final’ in the most profound sense of the word is revealed—a truth that breaks through all disguises and contradictions of life and history.”¹⁹

¹⁷ VanGemeren, W. A. (2008, Vol. 5, p. 566).

¹⁸ Kraus, H.-J. (1993, p. 93).

¹⁹ Kraus, H.-J. (1993, p. 89).

Yet I am always with you

- ❖ “the intimacy with God becomes a source of unsurpassed joy and divine presence more precious than anything else in all creation.”²⁰
 - “You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand” (Ps 16:11).
 - “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart” (Ps 37:4).
 - See also the Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-10).
- ❖ “And my portion forever.” Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6).

Psalm 73 and the New Testament

- ❖ Hebrews 10:19-23 is a call to draw near to Christ. This will help the modern preacher to relate verse 15-17 to the New Testament community of believers:
 - “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.”

He is our strength

- ❖ “He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” (Isa 40:29-31).
- ❖ Kraus comments: “In the sanctuary, the place of the presence of God (vv. 17a*, 28a*), the psalmist becomes aware of an unchangeable fact (cf. v. 1*): I belong to you. ‘You have taken hold of my right hand.’”²¹
 - LET THIS IS ALSO BE TRUE FOR CHURCH SERVICES!
 - “The church today, like the temple in former days, should provide such a fellowship, and there the things that puzzle and confuse begin to fall into place, even if we do not get the kind of answers we were asking for.”²²

²⁰ Crenshaw, J. L. (1992). Job, Book of. In D. N. Freedman (Ed.), (Vol. 3, p. 865).

²¹ Kraus, H.-J. (1993, p. 90).

²² Wilcock, M. (2001, Vol 2, p. 8).

Quotation

- ❖ C.S. Lewis wrote: “We can be left utterly and absolutely *outside*—repelled, exiled, estranged, finally and unspeakably ignored. On the other hand, we can be called in, welcomed, received, acknowledged.”²³
 - Quoted by Wilcock: “More than one commentator quotes Lewis’s powerful words concerning the two destinies. ... That final distinction will answer all the psalmist’s questions.”²⁴
- ❖ In Job 21:7-16, Job says: (See also Psalm 37)
 - **Why do the wicked live on,
growing old and increasing in power?**
They see their children established around them,
their offspring before their eyes.
Their homes are safe and free from fear;
the rod of God is not upon them.
Their bulls never fail to breed;
their cows calve and do not miscarry.
They send forth their children as a flock;
their little ones dance about.
They sing to the music of tambourine and harp;
they make merry to the sound of the flute.
**They spend their years in prosperity
and go down to the grave in peace.
Yet they say to God, ‘Leave us alone!
We have no desire to know your ways.
Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him?
What would we gain by praying to him?’
But their prosperity is not in their own hands,
so I stand aloof from the counsel of the wicked.**

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²³ (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/Reflections_To_Be_Summoned_Inside

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