Asaph's Odyssey

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Date: 13 July 2025

Preacher: Chris Oswald

[0:00] Amen. You can be seated. And if you'll open your Bibles to the book of Psalms, we're in Psalm 73 this morning. A fairly common form of ancient literature is the hero's journey. And the hero's journey simply involves some series of travels and trials and narrow escapes with the hero landing home eventually to reflect on the lessons that he has learned.

Probably the most famous of all the hero's journeys, maybe even an archetype, would be Homer's Odyssey, where Odysseus goes out after a war and faces many trials, many difficulties, cyclopses and harpies and sirens, and arrives home eventually after many deliverances to his wife and son. The title for the sermon today is Asaph's Odyssey because this is a passage about a man who is, spiritually speaking, a kind of a hero.
He is the author of at least 12 Psalms and the book of Psalms. He was a worship leader in the Temple of David. He was a Levite, a priest. And 2 Chronicles 29, I believe, says that in addition to all those things, he was a seer, which means he was a prophet. He had unusual discernment.
And what is happening in Psalm 73 is Asaph recounting his own hero's journey through one particular trial. And that trial has to do with envy of the wicked.
[1:43] Or more specifically, I think, probably more than envy of the wicked, the trial itself is the fact that there are so many wicked people who seem to be doing quite well, thank you.

That's the basic context of this psalm. It opens in verse 1, truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.
But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled. My steps had nearly slipped. This mighty spiritual man nearly slipped.
For, he says in verse 3, I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. In the heroic journey kind of narrative, you usually wind up with the hero at home recounting his stories to his loved ones.
And here Asaph is saying, I went through something, a great adventure of the soul, a great trial, when I observed the prosperity of the arrogant. And I want to tell you how I escaped it.
[2:46] That's what Psalm 73 is doing. The problem starts when he is looking at the wicked, and sometimes it's not like you have any choice, because sometimes it's just right up in your face.

Beginning in verse 6 or so, he describes the nature of the wicked. Pride is their necklace. Violence covers them like a garment. They scoff and they speak with malice.
They threaten oppression. Their tongues strut through the earth. And they seem quite happy. That's the tension in this section. There's all of this evil at work in them, but all of this good manifesting in their lives.
Verse 4, They have no pangs until death. Their bodies are fat and sleek. They are not in trouble as others are. They are not stricken like the rest of mankind.
Behold, these are the wicked, always at ease. And they increase in riches. This is Asaph's cyclops.
[3:53] You know, in Homer's Odyssey, Odysseus faces the one-eyed giant, sees it consume many of his men, and he himself narrowly escapes.

And Asaph's one-eyed giant is the green-eyed giant. Watching the wicked and feeling a sense of envy. And what's going on there?
Hopefully you understand this. You're in touch with your own experience spiritually enough to think through this. You look at them. They have no regard for the Lord. And yet their lives seem to be better than yours.
And it makes you feel like the basic mechanics of morality in the universe are broken. He thinks that. His heart is bitter.

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He's acting like a beast before the Lord. His feet are nearly to stumble. Because he concludes in verse 13, after observing the wicked and all of their prosperity, he says in verse 13, all in vain, I have kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence.
[4:57] All of this holiness has gone to waste. There was a simpler way. I could have just done what I wanted and turned out as happy as a clam. What's going on in this particular situation, I think it's important to understand, is that when you observe the wicked prospering, which is inevitable, this is something you will see, what's happening here is essentially a living, breathing meme telling you that God doesn't care what you do.

Did you know that the invention of the use of the word meme as we see it today came from Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book called The Selfish Gene. Before he was a famous militant atheist, he was just a non-famous militant atheist.
And he was trying to figure out from his, you know, biological perspective, he's obviously a guy who thinks a lot about genes. He's trying to figure out, well, why do bad ideas move?
Not bad ideas. How do ideas move? How do they catch on? And how are they passed on from one generation to the next? And he said that they are sort of like genes, ideas, but they're memes.
They're these sort of pictures of a particular way of life, and they can be contagious. Now, that book was published a year after I was born, so it was pretty hard reading for me at the time.
[6:18] But, no, I later understood more of what Dawkins was getting at when I read the works of Neal Stephenson, who is a science fiction writer, and he started talking about mind virus.

And you've heard that phrase by now. That's Stephenson. That was probably in the 90s. And he had this idea that there are notions, ideas, concepts that are virulent.
And if you are in contact with them, they spread to you. And this is how ideas move throughout the world. So, for Dawkins, it's sort of the meme, which is a genetic idea almost.
And for Stephenson, it's like the mind virus. The thing I want you to understand is that what Asaph is dealing with here is a mind virus. It's a picture that's being presented to him.
Oftentimes, friends, in the world, it's the only picture you see. To your left and to your right, you see people with no regard for the Lord doing quite well, thank you. And this meme, this mind virus, is infecting Asaph.
[7:23] It hasn't killed him yet. It hasn't taken him over. But it's definitely infected him. Now, as I survey the scriptures, I see three different kind of seasons of life where the mind virus that Asaph is dealing with can attack you.

And I thought I would share just three times to be on the lookout for this sort of thing. The first one is kind of obvious. But just in the midst of suffering, when life gets very hard for you, it is natural to glance over and notice that many people with absolutely no interest in the Lord are doing quite well.
This is where Job is. That's where Job's head is at, at a certain point. In Job 34, he is attributed to have said, it profits a man nothing that he should take delight in God.
Why does Job think that? He is suffering greatly, and he looks over at the others who have no interest in the Lord, and they aren't suffering at all. In Job's conclusion, it profits a man nothing that he delight in the Lord.
Suppose, here's an example. Suppose you lose a loved one who was, relatively speaking, a good and kind person. And you look around at all of the far worse people that God has chosen to keep alive.
[8:43] This is when this mind virus can grab a hold of you. Suppose you're struggling with fertility, and you are also seeing plenty of parents that are just absolutely mailing it in.

No effort at all. Not taking it seriously at all. And this is those moments where, in your suffering, the mind virus that ASAP is dealing with can get into you.
It's the same as if you're, maybe you've made some decisions about how to raise your kids, and you've forsaken, at this time, a two-income household, so that you can dedicate one parent directly to this kid at all times, rather than farm that out.
And you realize, man, this is really costing me a lot. You're suffering in some way, and you're looking at the rest of the world who pays. No regard to these things and questioning whether your zeal was really worth it.
That's the second category, the second season in which you might become susceptible to this mind virus. And that is, after you've expended a great deal of effort or sacrifice or zeal for the Lord.

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[9:48] There are periods of time when the Lord will get a hold of you, and He will call you to some great task, and you will expend an unusual amount of effort, perhaps even paying an unusual price, to serve Him in the way that He's called you to serve Him.

And boy, you've got to watch out in those moments, because, you know, you've just done something kind of hard, and you're going to be tired. You're going to be a little beaten up. And what we see in the Scriptures is that after men follow this call, they often go through a period of disillusionment with the Lord.
Elijah, after his stand at Mount Carmel, lays down and says to the Lord, it is enough, Lord, it is enough. Take my life. I am just like any other man. He says, I alone, I alone have withheld my knee from bending to the false gods of the day.
He's disillusioned, and he thinks that, you know, maybe none of this was worth it, because all these people who didn't make this great effort, they seem to be doing really fine, thank you. I remember when I was first starting out in ministry, we were in an affluent area, and we were dead broke.
I was the associate pastor of this local church, and I would teach the youth every Wednesday night. And I remember just walking in to teach the youth and seeing that everybody, all the teenagers that I was about to share the gospel with had much nicer cars than I did.
[11:06] And none of these teenagers cared a rip about the Lord, and it was hard enough for me to keep their attention for three minutes. And here I am walking through, you know, the BMWs to tell these kids about Jesus.

You know, Jeremiah in Jeremiah 15 has this exact feeling. He alone, he feels, has stepped up to serve the Lord, and he just feels like, man, I just don't know if it was worth it.
Jeremiah 15, 16, he says to God, your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart. For I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts.
I did not sit in the company of revelers, nor did I rejoice. I sat alone because your hand was upon me, for you had filled me with indignation. Why then is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?
Will you be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail? I know I've explained this to you before, but I believe that it's important for you to understand what disillusionment with the Lord feels like, because if you can identify it, that's going to keep your foot from slipping ultimately, and I think this imagery that Jeremiah uses here is about as good as I've seen in the scriptures, so let me just explain it one more time.
[12:24] When you're living in an agrarian world, a world filled with wilderness, you go to build your house, what's the number one thing you're looking for before you build your house? You're looking for some water, looking for a creek or a stream of some sort, and so you go ahead and you find your stream, and you build your house next to this thing, and everything seems fine, and then you realize after a couple years of living there that this is a seasonal stream.

It doesn't have water all the time. In that way, it's a deceitful brook. It had the indication that it was going to sustain you, and now it feels like it's not.
Well, when you're infected with this mind virus and looking at how the wicked seem to be doing quite fine, you will sometimes think, Lord, did I just give up a bunch of stuff that was totally unnecessary and has no obvious consequence to my own happiness?
So that's the second way that this can kind of sneak up on you, is after you've expended a great deal of effort, you can look around and say, the people who didn't expend any effort seem to be just as happy or happier than I am.
And the third one, I would say, I don't know how I'd say this is a season exactly, but I think you need to understand that there is a, this is a tactic of the devil, and I just call it surprise attacks of disquietude, surprise attacks of discontentment.
[13:50] Let me give you some examples. A boy, let's say one of our boys, you know, a 10-year-old, he is watching sports because he's a red-blooded American male, and he sees, at some point it dawns on him, that some of his favorite players have a massive amount of God-given talent, a massive amount of wealth, and are complete spiritual fools.

And with 16 baby mamas. And the boy processes, okay, things I want in life are athletic ability and money, duh, you know, we all want that.
And, or we should. Anyway, no. And he has those things, and he doesn't care at all about this thing that my mom and dad say is the most important thing, which is the Lord.

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You know, a teenage girl, a young teenage girl, is on social media, and she sees the amount of likes that this other account gets simply because that girl is willing to act stupid or show more skin. And in this moment, the Asaphian mind virus is knocking on her door saying, you know, does it really count for anything that you're trying to walk this way when so-and-so over here is getting all sorts of attention for doing exactly the opposite of what God says to do?
[15:20] A pastor sees a faithless church absolutely filled to the gills. You know, all of these things are ways that just out of nowhere sometimes, this feeling of dissatisfaction, of disillusionment to the Lord creeps in.

And it's a real serious thing. Asaph escaped, but just by the skin of his teeth, he says at the beginning, as for me, my foot almost slipped. I almost stumbled. And what stumbling looks like, I think, in this moment is is that you start cutting corners and you start acting a little bit more like the world, especially in ways that other Christians wouldn't notice.
And you start maybe hedging your bets a little bit with some private sin, indulging your own desires, because after all, does it really matter? Does it really matter if I am righteous when the unrighteous seem to be doing quite fine?
So that's the trial that Asaph is facing, and I believe it's a trial that all of us will face. Now he gives us his story of escape in verse 16 on.
Look at verse 16. This is all mentally confusing to him. This is demoralizing to him. He says in verse 16, when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me to be a wearisome task.
[16:46] He couldn't come up with any clear explanation for why this was the way it was. And then he says this, until I went into the sanctuary of God and then I discerned their end.

The word sanctuary here is translated, should probably be translated as the holy places. It's a generic word that simply means a place set apart for the meeting of God's people with God.
It's used for the tabernacle. It's used for the temple. It's also just used for average places that people would meet with God. So it is completely appropriate, and this is one way we'll apply this today. It's completely appropriate for me to paraphrase that verse and say, until I went to church and then I discerned their end.
So I think it's completely appropriate for me in verse 16 to 17 to say it this way. But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went to church. Then I discerned their end.
Now here's a main point of application in today's message is that simply this. Whether you realize it or not, you do some of your best thinking when you're at church.
[17:56] You do some of your best thinking when you're at church. And here's one reason why. You were not created to think of naked propositions, of ideas.

You were created to experience truth embedded and personified in a community of truth and beauty. You were not created, let me say it again, you have a hard time just grabbing hold of ideas in their naked form.
Those are pretty slippery. You're just not made for that. God didn't give you that hardware. What he gave you was the ability to see the truth embedded in a person, the truth embedded in a relationship, the truth embedded in a community, and so forth.
So one of the things that happens when you go to church is you're tasting and seeing truth. You're not simply thinking about naked ideas. This idea of propositions versus place and people, I have been a fairly careful political observer for a very long time.
And I will tell you, I think this is probably the most consequential development in our culture, in our political culture, in my lifetime. And that is, is that following World War II, there was this sort of sense that what a nation was, was an idea.
[19:16] And America was an idea. It was a proposition. It was a truth. And that all really mattered was like this principle. That's the thing that matters. It's the truth of this thing. What that was forgetting was, is that truth always embeds itself in a particular place and a particular people.

And that's what culture is. Culture is truth embedded in place and people. And what's, what's been happening, and this is what populism, the fact that you're seeing is populism.
But what's been happening is people saying, hold on, we love the certain, the truths, the inalienable truths, so called, that we see and that we, we form our, our democracy around, and so forth.
We like those truths. But reality, this nation is not a set of truths. It's a place with a certain kind of people that believe those truths and live out those truths. And this has really been, I would say, as I

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said before, the seismic shift in the political world was that this is now, I would say, agreed upon in a way that I never anticipated seeing it agreed upon.
What is really going on much more deeply than that is that that is actually just the truth of how people work. People do not just grab ideas and that's good enough for them.
[20:37] They have to see those ideas embodied. They have to see those ideas in a particular place and in particular people. And that's actually the reason why Asaph is struggling so much.

Because what he is seeing isn't just a statement on a billboard, don't follow God, it doesn't matter, you'll be fine either way. What he's seeing are actual people who have staked their lives and their happiness on obeying their own passions.
But he's not, he's not seeing propositions, he's seeing people. And seeing people is much more powerful than just seeing an idea. Seeing that idea embedded and enculturated, that's a much more important thing.
And that's what he says in verse 16. When I thought about how to understand this, he's living in his mind, he's just thinking about ideas, it proved to me to be a wearisome task. But when I went into the sanctuary, which is a particular place with a particular people living a particular plan, then I understood.
What's the antidote to the mind virus of seeing prospering wicked people surrounding you in the world seeming quite happy? What's the real antidote? You go to church and you see another group of people, another meme, another mind virus, counter-propaganda, and that is, this is a place set apart by the Lord for the worship of God by God's people following a certain plan that God has been working from the foundation of the earth.
[22:11] That's the way he escapes the mind virus. Not simply by thinking good thoughts, but by going to church. I think it's very important that you understand that church is the place you will do your best thinking even with babies talking, even with air conditioner fumbling along.

You will do your best thinking because you are not necessarily aware of it, but your whole self is absorbing the truths presented here in a way that you can't do without the church.
That's one of the reasons why the writer of Hebrews, in the midst of great persecution, in the midst of a great risk of going to church, that's one of the reasons why the writer of Hebrews says this in Hebrews 10.23, let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful, and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.
Why tell people who will suffer if they go to church to go to church because you do some of your best thinking in going to church? The reality is is that when you're living out in the world, the main message is do what you want, God doesn't care.
Where's the antidote to that way of thinking? Is it in your devotional in the morning? I'm glad you're reading your devotional in the morning, but the main antidote according to Asaph is I couldn't figure this out until I went to the holy place.
[23:48] And then I had discernment. This is very common in the Psalms to remember the church, to remember worship as the antidote to spiritual discouragement.

Another non-Davidic Psalm is from the Sons of Korah, Psalm 42. My tears have been my food day and night. This is a guy who's really struggling while they say to me all the day long, where is your God?
Same message, right? He's hearing the same thing. Where is your God? The world and this mind virus is affecting him. These things I remember as I pour out my soul, how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude-keeping festival.
So when we stand, here's the basic idea of this message, when we stand in God's appointed place, on God's appointed day, with God's elected people, we don't just hear the truth, we see it and we feel it and we experience it.
The way you get out of the worldly mind virus is you stand in God's appointed place on God's appointed day with God's elected people and you receive the truth in all of your senses and you live to fight another day.
[25:09] your knees are strengthened, your back is stiffened, your forehead becomes harder and you say, you know what, the world is just full of lies and today I was reminded of that.

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I want to give you kind of some clarity about why this works. Why going to church is the effective antidote to this kind of mind virus.
The first is, I just listed out a few reasons that this works. The first is, a place. When people say they can find God just as clearly as on the golf course as they can at church, they are wrong.
The word holy means set apart. Set apart by whom? By God. God has made a place for him to be worshipped and that place is the local church.
Can you be with God anywhere? Of course you can. Can you talk to God on the golf course? Of course you can. But I want to tell you something very clear. This is the propositional naivete that led a bunch of people to think that online church was real church.
[26:16] No. There is a place. God appointed it. It's the local church. Therefore, let us not forsake the assembly of the brethren as some have grown in the habit of doing so.

The truth is is that when you walk into a place that has been appointed by God to serve God, to listen to God, one of the messages coming through in this place is God providentially for decades before I even knew he was around had built up a people to make this place possible.
You're plugging into something, a story, and it's much bigger than you. And it goes way beyond your own faith. But I think the most important reason why church allows you to do your best thinking is because the church is full of God's people.
I think Asaph's problem came because he was surrounding himself disproportionately, perhaps not, honestly, not to his own blame potentially, with people who simply believed lies.
And the antidote, of course, is to fill your life with people who believe the truth. Truth is, if you will come to church on a regular basis, you will encounter people who trust the Lord, who try to obey his word, who serve one another, and have a general preference, a general desire for holiness.
[27:34] Now this gets us to another aspect of people in the church, and that is that God has designed the church to be a hierarchy with people in charge, with leaders. Why? I'll tell you the main reason.

A Christian leader is supposed to be a meme. You're supposed to look at a Christian leader and say, if I follow God, that's how my life will go. That's what a leader is.
You're supposed to, in your moments of doubt, be able to say, if I live my life like that guy lives his life, I'll have joy, everything will be okay. I've seen how that guy suffers, I've seen how that guy deals with prosperity, that's what a leader is.
A leader is someone that you can look at, this is Hebrews 13, 7, look at them, imitate their way of life, and consider the outcome of their way of life. So God has designed the church actually to be this sort of truth antidote, or truth serum to you to wake you up, smelling salts, that's a good picture of it, to wake you up and say, no, no, no, there are people who are serving the Lord and they have joy and here's some leaders, look at them.
Now, I bring that up because it's very important that we at this moment understand what disunity and what fallen leaders are in a local church.
[28:57] The devil understands that the local church is the basic antidote to this worldly mind virus. It's the place you can go and be reminded, no, it really does matter how I live, God really is concerned, he really does care, he really is watching, so forth.

And you're supposed to be able, as a weary Asaph saint, to wander in here and be surrounded by other people who, you know, maybe you borrow their faith today. You know, maybe the battery in your faith is dead and you jumpstart your faith because the person next to you has come and they're ready to worship and they're okay today.
And we all, we will all jump our cars off each other at certain points in life. So the idea is the church is meant for that. Well, the enemy knows this. And so what he will love to do is he would love to have a discouraged saint come into a church just desperately in need of being able to look at somebody and say, that person's serious, that person really does believe, that person isn't a sham. And he would love, he would love to fill the church full of people, particular leaders, but also just regular Christians who are shams, who are hidden landmines of discouragement for that weak and feeble saint.
And this is absolutely why two things are so important. The first one is accountability in our leadership structure. And number two, this is why church discipline is so important. We will take care of our sin problems in our church so that the weary saint can come into our church and see the truth personified.

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[30:28] That's why church discipline matters. It's really for the weary saint who needs a safe place to go and look to his left and his right and say, yeah, these people really do believe God and they really do trust him and they really do walk with him.

And the final, well, another thing that happens when you go to church is you see a place that's devoted to God, people who are trying to walk with God, but you also see the price that comes with trying to follow God.
You will see people who give up their weekends routinely to serve the kingdom. You will see people who effectively work for free every ten years because they faithfully tithe ten percent of their income every month.
and that adds up, friends. It really adds up. You will see people who make all sorts of sacrifices to make it possible for you to be here.
And that price, seeing a price paid for the truth, it just has a way of sobering a person up. Seeing a sacrificial Christian has this unique way of sobering up a saint who is being infected by the mind virus.
[31:40] The great challenge, of course, is that we don't flaunt our sacrifices. We don't flaunt our service. So you have to be around enough to know things. We don't advertise how much we serve or how much we give, but if you're discouraged, you need to find someone and say, you know, you've served all this time.

Was it worth it? You've given all this money. Was it worth it? And you need to hear the joy. Backing up real quick, one of the reasons why, I'll tell you, if you're an aspiring pastor, the biggest thing you owe your people is joy.
And it gets to this very same thing. They need to look at you and see not only that you've been faithful, but that you're glad you were faithful. You have to have joy. Anyway, so this sacrifice sort of sobers up a person, and there's a great story in The Silver Chair.
Some of you probably know exactly where I'm going with this. is the witch has got the kids and, and, what's the Marsh Wiggles name? Puddle Glum.
Thank you. He's got, he's got the kids and Puddle Glum totally entranced. And she is just gaslighting them to a tremendous degree. She's trying to convince them that the whole world they just came from didn't exist.
[32:54] And that Aslan isn't real. And so on and so forth. And this is just getting really bad because the fire is bewitching them and there's music playing and the kids are falling under this spell and Puddle Glum realizes what's happening.

And it's like, how does Puddle Glum wake everybody up? He's kind of a sourpuss. He's kind of a negative glass half empty guy in general. But in this moment, the grumpy Christian wins because what he realizes is the only way to wake them up is to step on this fire.
And so he burns his foot on the fire sacrificially. The room is, Lewis describes as the room was filled with the smell of burnt marsh wiggle which immediately broke the trance.
And it's like, well how do you break the trance of worldliness in a local church? You have people who serve and lead and sacrifice and give and that burnt offering smell wakes you up and reminds you, no it's a good thing actually.
It's a good thing actually to give of yourself. It's a good thing actually to give up your weekends. It's a good thing to give up your financial security to some degree. It's a good thing and that's really what we're trying to design Providence.
[34:01] This may sometimes look like a place with absolutely no plan. It is not that at all. The plan is is to have the environment that a new Christian, a non-Christian, a struggling Christian can walk in and literally through some intentional discipleship on our part land in the embrace and the attention of a faithful Christian who has followed Jesus has time for that person and has a certain amount of gravitas that is noticeable.

One thing that we talk about is we want any new person to wind up with a serious Christian their very first visit to Providence and we want them to be in the home of a serious Christian by their third visit or something like that.
We actually do have a plan and the plan is to disciple a bunch of the world's Christians who are so weary of the world's messaging that selfishness is just a perfectly fine way who want to sober them up and say no, no, no, no, no.

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You have to meet so-and-so. You have to meet so-and-so and you'll see there is a better way. That's why Asaph was awoken from this mind virus. He was in the right place. He was with the right people and he also saw the price that was paid for the building of the temple for the care of the temple and so on and so forth and finally he saw the plan.
When you go to church you are reminded that actually all is as planned. God is at work and this will all go the way it's supposed to go. In Romans 2, 6-11 Paul does a great job describing the basic plan.
[35:39] He will render to each one according to his works to those who by patience and well-doing seek for glory, honor, and immortality he will give eternal life but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness there will be wrath and fury.

There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil the Jew first and also the Greek but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good the Jew first and also the Greek for God shows no partiality.
That's what Asaph sees when he goes to church. He sees that for the wicked there will be wrath and fury. Look at verse 17. Until I went to the sanctuary of God then I discerned their end.
Truly you set them in slippery places. You make them fall to ruin how they are destroyed in a moment swept away utterly by terrors. For those who trust in the Lord there will be the Bible says eternal life, glory, honor, and peace.
and one of the things that comes through in this psalm is this word slip. If you're reading psalms you want to pay attention for this kind of moments where things repeat.
[36:49] We got slip at the beginning asked for me my foot almost slipped and then in verse 26 my flesh and my heart may fail but God is my strength and my portion forever.

I don't slip because God is my strength but the people verse 19 they are in the wicked people they are in a slippery place.
That's the plan. The thing that you need to be reminded of and this is why we go to church is that when you follow God your feet are on solid ground and when you don't you stand on the slippery place.
Deuteronomy 32 31 God speaking through the prophet Moses says for their rock the enemy's is not as our rock our enemies are by themselves.
Our enemies are by themselves. This is the number one reason not to be an amoral self-indulgent idiot. You will die alone in terror and insecurity as you face the moment you have no control over and there will be no one there to help you.
[37:58] You will go from that moment of total incapacity and helplessness and you will spend eternity in hell. There will be wrath and fury for everyone who does evil but glory honor immortality for those who do good.

The number one reason and the number one part of the plan that wearying Christians who are tempted to live like the world need to hear is this does not end well for the wicked. Their feet are on slippery places.
Jonathan Edwards in his famous sermon this is one of his main texts in sinners in the hands of an angry God and he talks about the wicked who are so full of themselves and so sure of themselves and so contented in their pleasures as if they are unknowingly walking on a big sheet of ice down a huge set of stairs and he pictures these people so full of themselves so sure that you can live however you want walking down a bunch of icy stairs without understanding it is literally only a matter of time until their foot slips and then Edward says where do they go when they slip?
Where do they fall? That's the plan. That's the truth. I'm telling you the truth this morning and that's one of the reasons we go to church is to have a wake up call from all of the worldly lies and say no there's actually a way this is all going to play out and as for me I'm going to follow the Lord.
Well he ends by seeing real clearly a connection to eternal joy. The plan headed to an eternal place.
[39:44] He says nevertheless I'm continually with you you hold my right hand you give me your counsel and afterward you will receive me to glory whom have I in heaven but you and there is nothing on earth that I desire beside you.

He says again you guide me with your counsel and afterward you will receive me to glory. You know we when we were figuring out what the sanctuary means we just said it's a place God prepared to meet with God's people.

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The final piece of the plan of course is for every one of you who have put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his atoning work done on your behalf when he died for your sins. The final piece of the plan is for you to live forever in the sanctuary and all of the truth will seem so true and all the lies will seem so deceitful and wrong.
That final sanctuary for each one of us that are in Christ is the place of perfect discernment where we see oh absolutely it was a terrible idea for these people to live for themselves.
what a terrible thing and oh absolutely it was a glorious wonderful thing given to me by God's grace alone to have walked with him and trusted him.
[41:04] The end of the plan is a final moment of discernment in the final sanctuary which has been prepared for you by God and will be lowered to you like a bride to the groom where you will dwell forever with the Lord.

And there's one more Lewis moment that I just have to include. You're going if you're in Christ if you if you serve him and not yourself if you live for him if you take it seriously to follow Jesus you're going to spend eternity in perfect joy in every conceivable way.
And in the last battle of course Lewis has some really glorious sentences about this. One of them including all their life in this world and all their adventures had only been the cover and the title page.
Now at last they were beginning chapter one of the great story which no one on earth has read which goes on forever in which every chapter is better than the one before.
That's why we should follow Jesus. Because this life is actually just the cover page. We're going to live forever somewhere.
[42:21] If we make Jesus Christ our refuge every chapter will be better than the chapter before.
For communion today I just invite you to consider Asaph's conclusion.

For behold those who are far off from you shall perish. You put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. I would invite you to pair that with something like Romans 5.
For he died for you when you were his enemy so that you wouldn't be unfaithful to him anymore. He bought you so that you could resist sin and have victory over Satan and obey him in the Holy Spirit. He has done an amazing thing for you. You could pair this with John 3.16. Asaph says, For behold those who are far from you shall perish. John 3.16. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.
That whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life. So this table is another example of what I'm talking about. It's not just a proposition.
[43:26] It's a truth you can taste and see. So would you come in a moment after I pray and take these elements and sit in your seat and just thank Jesus for plucking you out and picking you and keeping you?

You would have stumbled a thousand times if he didn't have your hand. And so when we celebrate community today we get to celebrate not only that we have the truth but that he has kept us in the truth in spite of many temptations to leave.
Father God we praise your holy name for how faithful and good and true you are to us and we thank you for your glorious word. Now Lord as we partake of the Lord's table would you help us indeed to taste and see that you are good.
In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Come. Amen. Thank you.

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