



**Sermon, Sunday December 12, 2021**

## **“God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever”**

**SCRIPTURE: Psalms 73:12-28** <sup>12</sup>Such are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. <sup>13</sup>All in vain I have kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. <sup>14</sup>For all day long I have been plagued, and am punished every morning. <sup>15</sup>If I had said, “I will talk on in this way,” I would have been untrue to the circle of your children. <sup>16</sup>But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, <sup>17</sup>until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end. <sup>18</sup>Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. <sup>19</sup>How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors! <sup>20</sup>They are like a dream when one awakes; on awaking you despise their phantoms. <sup>21</sup>When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, <sup>22</sup>I was stupid and ignorant; I was like a brute beast toward you. <sup>23</sup>Nevertheless I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. <sup>24</sup>You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me with honor. <sup>25</sup>Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you. <sup>26</sup>My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. <sup>27</sup>Indeed, those who are far from you will perish; you put an end to those who are false to you. <sup>28</sup>But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, to tell of all your works.

### **Introduction: A psalm of Asaph**

Today is the third week of Advent. As we await the baby Jesus, we light the candle of love. We wish the love of the Lord be with all who await the coming of the baby Jesus.

The text we share today was written by Asaph in the days of King David. Asaph was charged with singing and playing musical instruments in the temple.

Psalm 73 is the first psalm of the third book among all the psalms and contains the introductory meaning of the third book. Also, today's text shows how Asaph overcomes the crisis of faith. But Asaph's psalms resonate with our hearts because his experiences are so similar to our daily experiences.

In last week's sermon, we saw David's trust in the Lord through Psalm 23. I hope that through Asaph's psalm today, we will all be challenged by Asaph's mature faith.

### **Body: Asaph's Testimony**

#### **1) The crisis of faith that came to Asaph**

In verse 2 of today's text, Asaph says: **“But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped.”** In this verse, Asaph confesses the crisis of faith that came to him. But why did the crisis of faith come to Asaph? Asaph explains the cause of the crisis that came to him. **“For I was envious of the arrogant; I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”**(v.3) Asaph was jealous of the wicked worldly success and prosperity, and he had covetousness in his heart. Asaph looked at the prosperity of the wicked with eyes of covetousness and jealousy. That is why Asaph could not know the essence of the prosperity of the wicked.

What would the life of the wicked look like through these crooked eyes? In today's text verses 4-11, we see the prosperous figure of the wicked that Asaph described.



**(Verses 4-5) "For they have no pain; their bodies are sound and sleek. They are not in trouble as others are; they are not plagued like other people."**; Even when the wicked die, they should be judged, but this is not the case.

**(V.7) "Their eyes swell out with fatness; their hearts overflow with follies."**; The wicked are healthy and make a lot of money.

**(V. 9) "They set their mouths against heaven, and their tongues range over the earth."** ; Because the lives of the wicked correspond to worldly success, people listen to them and try to follow them.

For these reasons, doubts about faith arise in Asaph's heart. **Today, let's look at verses 13-14. "All in vain I have kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, and am punished every morning."**; Asaph is skeptical about his life as a child of faith. However, the reason Asaph shows us maturity is that he did not remain skeptical of faith. Asaph overcomes his doubts about faith.

## 2) The process of overcoming

Let's look at verse 15 of today's text. **"If I had said, 'I will talk on in this way,' I would have been untrue to the circle of your children."** In this verse, Asaph is cautious about badly influencing the children of faith because of his own doubts about his faith. So, he doesn't speak out to others about the skepticism in his heart. Asaph knows that his negative words can have a bad effect on the children of faith.

So, instead of complaining about his problems to people, Asaph brings his problems to the Lord. Verses 16-17 of today's text describes Asaph's efforts. **"But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end."**

Even in the midst of inner conflict, Asaph seeks the temple. And Asaph realizes two things before the Lord. **First, instead of being jealous of the prosperity of the wicked, we should have compassion on the wicked.** The judgment of the Lord awaits the wicked. So, the prosperity of the wicked in the world should not be the object of our envy or jealousy, but rather we should have pity on them.

**Today's text verses 18-20 says; "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! They are like a dream when one awakes; on awaking you despise their phantoms."**

**Second, Asaph realizes what the Lord's special love is for him.** Let's look at today's texts, verses 23-24; **"Nevertheless I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me with honor."**

In our religious life, sometimes we think we can worship diligently and obey the Word with our will and effort. However, all these things require the help of the Lord. Asaph realized this. He also learned that the Lord always cares for us and loves us.

## 3) Going beyond the problem with dedication

So, Asaph repents as he expresses in this verse; **"I was stupid and ignorant; I was like a brute beast toward you."**(v.22) And Asaph overcomes his problems and moves forward with devotion to the Lord. So Asaph makes the surprising confession; **"Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you."**(v.25)

What this confession means is that we have longed for other things in the world, but now there is no one in heaven and on earth we can long for more than the Lord. And Asaph goes on to confess; **"My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."**(v.26) Also, verse 28 says; **"But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, to tell of all your works."**

Asaph in this passage confesses that the best thing in the world is not worldly success, not being ahead of others, but being close to the Lord.

### **Conclusion: The Lord is the strength of my heart**

Now let's summarize today's sermon. Asaph confesses in verse 26 of today's text; "**God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.**"

Asaph clearly answers the doubts and challenges of faith that we experience in our religious life through his testimony. Please always be aware that our pride and covetousness are at the root of our envy and jealousy towards the world. So we hope we can be more careful when difficulties in our faith come. Rather than trying to solve problems through people, we want to pray more to the Holy Spirit for faith and wisdom to take our problems before the Lord.

Faith growth is achieved through the cooperation and help of the community, but a very deep personal encounter with the Lord is essential. Without such a process, the Lord's love, mercy, and justice come to us as empty echoes. However, after going through a deep personal encounter with the Lord, like Asaph's confession in today's text, the Lord becomes our rock and all we need. Today, the third week of Advent, waiting for the baby Jesus, the candle of love is lit. Dear brothers and sisters, I bless you with the confession that the Lord is not just part of what we need, He is all we need.