

## 1. What is Envy? (2-11)

- a. Envy is LOOKING at and LONGING for the prosperity that other people have
  - i. Envy is comparative
    1. it is not just greed, but comparative greed
    2. It is not just vanity, it is comparative vanity
    3. It is not just that we want power, we want more power than the other guy
    4. It is covetousness – it sees its neighbor’s prosperity and then it wants it
  - ii. Envy tempts us to give up on God when we don’t prosper and the wicked do (2-5)
    1. Envy begins when we look around and see the prosperity of wicked men
      - a. The psalmist looks around and sees those who live with no regard for God or His righteousness living opulent lives of comfort and blessing and long life.
        - i. **“there are no pangs until death” (v4)**
        - ii. **“their porches are fat” (v4)**
      2. But not only that, he also looks at his own life and sees a great paucity of comfort, rest, and prosperity – his life is hard and difficult and full of suffering
        - a. **“mankind is in toil – NOT THEM!!” (v5)**
        - b. **“they were not stricken with Adam” (v5)**
        - c. Envy wants to trade places with the other person when we see their prosperity
    - iii. Envy is based upon a sense of injustice (6-11)
      1. Sometimes this sense of injustice is inaccurate – with Asaph it is accurate
      2. He looks around and sees that these same people are wicked and oppressive.
        - a. **“violence is the coat they put on” (v6)** – public, identity, “necklace” boast
        - b. **“they mock and speak with evil intentions” (v8)**
        - c. **“they threaten from powerful positions” (v8)**
        - d. **“they drain the full waters” (v10)**
        - e. He thinks that they don’t deserve to have a good life, *and he does*.
      3. Justice cries out, “Where is our sovereign, righteous God when the sex trafficker naps on his yacht?”
        - a. God is good to the “pure in heart” (v1). That makes sense. So why does he seem to do good to the impure in heart?
        - b. This is a struggle that exists in the realm of justice.
          - i. I see the unjust people receive blessing – this seems unjust!
          - ii. I see the just people not receiving blessing – this seems unjust!
        - c. It’s tragically easy for us to lose our footing because we have a short view of God’s justice – we want everything immediately.
      4. The wicked even encourage others to disregard God and live for themselves defiantly (10-11)
        - a. Not only do the unbelievers disregard God for themselves, but they are actively working to encourage others to do so, too. This reality ramps up our outrage that God would “do good” to them.
        - b. They don’t even care that they are consuming people, abusing people, using people, and taking everything around them without regard for the poor, the weak, the needy, the vulnerable.
        - c. They live for themselves, without real concern for others, and reap the good things of the earth.

5. The God-rejecters are wealthy, healthy, and comfortable. Their toxic cocktail of health and wealth and comfort becomes a prosperity “gospel” of degradation. They live pompous and arrogant lives, as they look down on everyone else and abuse others. They have tongues that strut, so they despise God as unspeaking and powerless. They have bank accounts that prosper, so they despise God as worthless. They have indulgences that abound, so they despise God as an opiate for the poor and lowly.
  6. Asaph looked at this predicament and felt the ground of his worldview shift under his feet: “As for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked”.
    - a. Footing is having your feet upon something solid, stable, capable of holding you up.
    - b. Asaph’s questions made him feel as though what he had trusted could not hold him up – that God’s Word was not trustworthy because he saw the wicked prosper and the faithful suffer.
- b. Envy overvalues present prosperity (12-14)
- i. Envy is the overflow of a heart that is not resting in God
    1. It is not that there is mere inequality that is the problem
      - a. It is that my *longing* for something other than God, and my *trust that these things will make be really live*, that fuels envy
    2. “Our hearts are restless until they beat in Thee, O God” – Augustine
    3. The major problem with competitive and comparative restlessness in our lives is because our hearts are constantly going on a quest to find our rest in something that we can see, something other than the invisible, uncreated, God of the long-view
    4. Envy looks at the wicked’s prosperity and idolizes it (12)
      - a. At ease...forever (hyperbole)
      - b. Increasing in power and influence
    5. **Envy moves from “I see that” to “I want that” to “I need that” to “I deserve that” to “I have to have that”**
  - ii. Envy, as idolatry, begins to consider it worth it to live wickedly in order to obtain those things (13)
    1. It appears to be worthless (empty, vain) to remain pure
    2. Purity brings struggle and suffering every day
      - a. There is a compounding effect of suffering – it stacks up and wears you down, you long for freedom from it
      - b. Envy makes the longing for freedom worse and brought Asaph almost to the point of sinning to get it
      - c. He was like a man so thirsty that he is willing to drink seawater, thinking that the short-term wetness would bring him life...but it would kill him
    3. Truth and Virtue and Righteousness are not pragmatic
      - a. They don’t “work” to obtain a better life now
      - b. Many people come to Jesus as a means to a better life
        - i. Some of you are very tired of being single, you want a satisfying romantic relationship, and assumed that Jesus will give it to you when you came to him
          1. When he hasn’t, you begin to see the wonderful romances of the unrighteous around you, the good marriages, the

- happiness, and you begin to doubt if you've been wrong all along – because God hasn't delivered
2. This is even more internally demonstrative if you struggle with same-sex desires
  - ii. Some of you come to the Church because you're longing for community, and you believe that if you pray more, or "plug in" to the church, that you will receive a great community where there is always someone to go to the movies with or hang out with
    1. But this kind of intimacy eludes you, you still struggle with deep and intense loneliness, you still feel on the periphery of life
    2. "Faith doesn't work for me"
  - iii. Some of you came to Jesus to make sense of your suffering, but you're just as confused, and sometimes sinners in the Church actually have added to your suffering
  - iv. Some of you have "heard from the Lord", but it didn't come about – so you are tempted to give up on God b/c others have received what you believed you were promised
- c. Envy damages souls
- i. It is damaging to your soul
    1. It weighs heavily upon the heart (16)
      - a. It is easy to become discouraged about this seeming inequality which Asaph sees
      - b. Why? – There is a gap between the promise and the fulfillment
        - i. God has promised good to His people...but He has also said that this good comes over a long-view
        - ii. It is a promise, though anchored in the history and soil of time and space, particularly in the person of Jesus Christ – His life in the Jordan Valley, His death at the hands of the Roman Empire as a criminal, and His victorious resurrection over death – is still yet incomplete
        - iii. Paul calls this "longing for the redemption of our bodies" in Romans 8 and something for which we "groan"
      - c. Asaph's groans are our groans – there is still a gap between the promise and the fulfillment
        - i. And we feel it
        - ii. The prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous – this injustice – weighs upon our hearts, too
    2. Yet, envy becomes "heavy" because it does not expect God to do anything about this present groaning – **it almost considers God not worth it**
      - a. While the faithful soul, tired in this gap, gets discouraged, it groans for the fulfillment by faith, trusting that God will make it right
  - ii. It is damaging to others' souls
    1. It tempts us to *betray others* to foolishness (15)
    2. Not only is envy a danger to our own souls, but in our desperation we can draw others into our own doubt, or worse, yet, our own rebellion
      - a. If Asaph's foot had slipped, instead of merely slipped, he would have influenced others to follow him
      - b. This is a serious betrayal of those whom we love

- i. We are not only responsible for ourselves, but we bear a responsibility for how we influence others
- ii. Asaph saw the danger of his own “blind leading the blind”

## 2. How Can I Engage Envy?

- a. Envy ends when we LOOK at the LASTING ONE (17-20)
- b. We must “enter the Sanctuary of God” and *look at His revelation of what is REAL and what is WORTHY*
  - i. It is in the sanctuary of God that he *understands* the whole picture, that he sees reality, that he ‘gets it’
    - 1. In Christianity, you begin to feel better when you start to think the truth. This man goes into the sanctuary *to understand*.
    - 2. You will never get out of your spiral unless you go to God saying, ‘The reason I’m mad and the reason I’m depressed and the reason I’m discouraged is because I’m missing something *in my thinking*.’
    - 3. Don’t minimize the work of the Holy Spirit here, but His work to is to “lead us into all truth” (John 16:13) and “remind us of the words of Christ” (John 14:26)
- c. We Must Look at the Whole Picture
  - i. Prosperity in this life is a deception which leads to the downfall of the arrogant (18)
    - 1. Their footing, while looking stable now, is actually slipper and smooth – they will fall
    - 2. In fact, Asaph says, “You will cause them to fall down” – it is God’s doing to bring about their downfall
  - ii. There is a reckoning coming – prosperity will not last (19)
    - 1. God will judge wickedness and will judge the wicked – promise yet to be fulfilled
      - a. Jesus is not only the King who gave His life to redeem the wicked who repent, but He is also the judge of the wicked who will not
        - i. **Revelation 19:11-18**
      - b. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, this dream will come to an end and the real story will begin
      - c. And this story for those who trust in their own power, their own success, their own sense of morality, will be horrifying!
        - i. “they are horrifyingly wasted!” (v18)
        - ii. “they come to an end, finished with a dreadful event!” (v18)
    - 2. For all prosperity apart from the LORD, without regard to the eternal God, is deception
      - a. It is like a dream – it feels real and substantial, but it is a phantom of reality (20)
      - b. Like a daydream that you are on a tropical beach, the bright sunshine warming your skin as you sip a mai-tai in a slight breeze – while in reality you are behind the wheel of your 3-ton coffin veering off the road into a 200 year old cedar tree
        - i. Which story matters? Which story is it imperative that you look at?
    - 3. The Real Story is that God will judge such arrogant image-bearers, prosperous or not in this life, as “worthless” (20)
      - a. Literally - “you will count your image as worthless”!! YIKES!!
        - i. Those who seek their own way, to define and live by their own story of right/wrong, good/bad, just/unjust, will one day see the

One whose story stands firm, not as a daydream, but as ultimate reality

- ii. Though they were made in the image of God Himself, He will count such an image as worthless...trash to be burned in the fire
  - iii. This is the end of the wicked, the arrogant, the proud, the malicious, the oppressive
    - 1. It is not prosperity, but calamity
  - iii. REALITY is usually not the thing which you thought it would be, and the eternal things are those of the long-view, those which root themselves deeply underneath this moment, under the bland and dirty soil of life – they are nourishing eternal life
    - 1. Moss grows on the surface in the months of abundant water, verdant and prolific
    - 2. But in the day of summer heat, when the waters are dried up by the intense power of the sun whose days go beyond the very earth, the moss is shriveled and burned up
    - 3. But the redwood? It remains. Because it's roots were not to the immediate moment, but to the long-view.
    - 4. So it is in the moral universe.
  - iv. God's slowness to make things right is because He is merciful, i.e. He turns moss into redwoods, and we were all "the wicked" and "the arrogant" at one point, until He opened our eyes and rescued us from our wickedness.
    - 1. His slowness now is because He is giving time for the arrogant to humble themselves
    - 2. Repent today!
3. When I Look to God as He Has Revealed Himself, I See Everything Else Clearly (21-26)
- a. C.S. Lewis wrote, "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it, I see everything else." (*The Weight of Glory*)
  - b. When I see clearly, I long rightly
    - i. We long for what we believe is the most beautiful thing, the most life-giving and life-affirming things
      - 1. If we believe that comfort from suffering is the most beautiful thing, the most life-affirming thing, than we long for it and do whatever it takes to obtain it
      - 2. If we believe that power is the most beautiful thing, control over my circumstance and over others is the most life-affirming thing, than we long for it and do whatever it takes to get it
    - ii. When we see clearly, however, we see the "brutishness" and the "foolishness" of such valuations
      - 1. Romance cannot grant us eternal life – it is not built to last
      - 2. Power cannot grant us eternal life – it is not built to last
      - 3. Complete justice in the present does not grant us life
    - iii. BUT THE LORD is eternal and grants eternal life and eternal prosperity and death-defying "glory" (24)
      - 1. "Whom have I in heaven but You?" (25)
  - c. I see myself clearly
    - i. My embittered heart revealed my brutishness (21-22)
    - ii. Envy is stupid
  - d. I see God's love clearly
    - i. I see that YOU are with me (23) and holding me secure
      - 1. This is what envy doubts, but what atonement proclaims

2. This is what no other relationship can ultimately procure – eternal security
- ii. I see that YOU guide me to live now **(24a)**
  1. Even now, when suffering is still present and prosperity is not felt in its fullness (I will still die)
  2. The LORD guides me into what I cannot see, he leads me through the Valleys of Deep Darkness into the green pastures (Psalm 23)
  3. “Nothing else on earth compares with You” **(25)**
- iii. I see that YOU will bring me to eternal prosperity (glory) afterwards **(24b)**
  1. And afterward, after these sufferings, after these hardships, after this present darkness...GLORY!
- e. I look at God clearly when I look at Jesus Christ
  - i. **2 Corinthians 4:6**
  - ii. I see God’s worthiness clearly at the Cross of Jesus Christ
    1. Asaph did not enter a temperature-controlled sanctuary with a glossy pulpit, upscale band setup, gel-filtered lights, and a smoke machine. No, Asaph more likely stepped into God’s sanctuary to the sight of knives and gore and priests flicking blood off their fingers. As blood poured out of the bowl’s brim, Asaph witnessed a stunning optic of God’s justice for sin: the guiltless bull suffering the punishment of death for guilty sinners (see Leviticus 4:4–7, Ezekiel 18:20).
    2. The sanctuary was where fresh bull blood was drained, sprinkled, and poured. It was in the final moments of violent death that Asaph saw divine reality in all its gore and thickness. There Asaph was confronted with a foretaste of the cross. And the timeline of God made sense.
    3. This life is not the full story. To worship and follow God is not measured in temporary blessings and comforts; it is measured in ultimate ends. In the sanctuary, the truth of God’s redemptive mercy came rushing back.
  - iii. I see that YOU are the greatest treasure **(25)** even if I lose everything in this present time **(26)**, for only you are eternal and only you are truly for me
    1. The fact that God, the betrayed and ignored, the belittled and rejected, though He is the only infinite being, the only one capable of eternal life, the only one worthy of listening to and trusting and obeying, would forgive our rebellion and rejection and betrayal and devaluation of Him at the expense of the blood of His own Son?!
      - a. Is He worth it?
      - b. What is worth it?
  - iv. Envy Ends When We Look at Eternity **(27-28)**
    1. TRUTH: Wickedness and arrogance only lead to destruction ultimately
    2. TRUTH: There is mercy with God when we come to Him in humble dependence
    3. TRUTH: Therefore, I will plant myself humbly in His presence based upon His atonement for me, regardless of what temporal prosperity others may receive

Asaph starts by saying that God is good to the pure in heart. How do we, then, get a pure heart? 1 John 3:2-3 – “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus *hopes in him* purifies himself as he is pure.”

What do you look to for hope of life that lasts, real life, abundant life, eternal life? What do you look to in order to bring you REAL prosperity and REAL and lasting rest, comfort, and peace? Everything but God will fade away, fail you, and will never forgive your failures. Those who put their trust in such things will be annihilated by the Eternal One on the day of His reckoning.

But, to those who close to Him, who entrust themselves to Him to hear and heed what He says to be right and good and true and worthy, He is good and works for their good. He gave His Son. What more could He give to prove it? And His Son was raised from the dead to verify His goodness and the fact that only He is the ground stable enough to set your feet and not slip.