

Praying in the Midst of Temptation

Psalm 73

Introduction: Over the past few weeks we have been doing a study on the topic of prayer from the book of Psalms. The book of Psalms is a kind of guide for many expressions of prayer. Some of the psalms help us give voice to our praises and thanksgivings. Others can help us pray our way through our troubles and times of suffering. In this study we are considering how to pray in the midst of our temptation.

Opening Question: What has been the most challenging part of your week so far?

Read Psalm 73

1. How would you describe the psalmist's experience?

2. At one point, how did the psalmist look at the wicked?

Steve said:

Asaph was being lured toward a lifestyle of indulgence and sin. Who among us hasn't felt that lure? There's a reason why even the Bible speaks of "the passing pleasures of sin": most sins (for a time at least) are very pleasurable. Have you ever felt that lure? Are there sins you'd commit in a heartbeat if you knew you wouldn't get caught and if you knew there wouldn't be serious consequences? Do you ever look around at people who indulge every desire and fantasy that comes into their mind and find yourself envious? Do you ever see the sensual lifestyles of people portrayed in the media and think, "I wouldn't mind being him/her for a week. . . ."?

3. What are your reactions to what Steve says here? Do you ever feel any of this?

4. Have you ever been tempted to believe that keeping yourself pure, or obeying God was futile? If so, how?

Steve said:

Prayer idea: *Talk with God about the sins that you secretly love.* There is great freedom in bringing our secret sins into the light of God's truth and the light of God's grace. When we deny or ignore the sins that we secretly love, we give them power in our lives. When we expose them for what they are (a traitor within), they lose at least some of their power.

5. Why do you think talking to God about the sins we secretly love might help?

6. Where in the psalm do you sense Asaph turning a corner in his thinking?

7. What does he begin to understand and affirm to be true of God?

Steve said:

Prayer Idea: Enter into God's presence ("the sanctuary") and rehearse both the tragic consequences of sin and the goodness of God. Asaph's experience illustrates that you don't have to run to a far-away country like the prodigal son before you "come to your senses." While he was in the midst of temptation he entered into the presence of God and came to his senses. . . Seeing the consequences of sin is a good start, but "avoiding sin" is never the deepest motivation for obedience. As Asaph's experience illustrates, our deepest motivation for obedience has to be God Himself. When Asaph entered into the sanctuary, he concluded, "Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart!" (v. 1). If we are going to avoid the temptations and the sins that we secretly love, you and I need be convinced of the goodness of God. Like Asaph we need to believe that "the nearness of God" is the greatest good we can experience.

8. How does being convinced of God's goodness help us in our battle with temptations?

9. What helps you be convinced of the goodness of God?