

“Slippery Ground”
 Psalm 73:1-28, John 3:16-18
 February 7, 2016

(Prayer for Understanding)

A Reading from the Old Testament Psalm 73:1-3

- ¹ Surely God is good to Israel,
 to those who are pure in heart.
² But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;
 I had nearly lost my foothold.
³ For I envied the arrogant
 when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Sermon “Slippery Ground” Dr. Pinder

- **Bimini Cruise. My feet almost slipped.**
 I would have been lost forever. Gulf Stream. Iceland.
 We just found out we were expecting our son.
 He would have never met his father ...
 It can be a scary thing when your feet almost slip.
- **But I know what the psalmist means when he said “*I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*”**
- **The people we call “successful.” They’ve “made it.”**
- **Bernie Madoff. Three more!**
- **Super Bowl is this evening. Think of how much pro athletes get paid!**
- **Godless Gangstas and their flashy necklaces, rings and “bling”**
- **Proud Pimps and their rides**
- **Fat cats**
- **What young man has never for a moment envied Hugh Hefner? Wanted to trade lives with him?**

- On the other hand,
people who know how to “work the system.” Food Stamps.
- Somebody steals your joke, or idea, or your answer in school.
- We’re not the only ones to feel this way. Listen to more verses from the psalm

A Reading from the Old Testament Psalm 73:4-12

- 4 They have no struggles;
their bodies are healthy and strong.^[a]
- 5 They are free from common human burdens;
they are not plagued by human ills.
- 6 Therefore pride is their necklace;
they clothe themselves with violence.
- 7 From their callous hearts comes iniquity^[b];
their evil imaginations have no limits.
- 8 They scoff, and speak with malice;
with arrogance they threaten oppression.
- 9 Their mouths lay claim to heaven,
and their tongues take possession of the earth.
- 10 Therefore their people turn to them
and drink up waters in abundance.^[c]
- 11 They say, “How would God know?
Does the Most High know anything?”
- 12 This is what the wicked are like—
always free of care, they go on amassing wealth.

Sermon “Slippery Ground” Dr. Pinder

- Even the Bible admits the wicked prosper!
- Why do good things happen to bad people??
- So why be good?
- “You must be Rod Pinder’s wife!
- If I didn’t tithe ...

- I've often said "God's way is always best," but sometimes it just doesn't look that way.

What does the Psalm say about that?

A Reading from the Old Testament Psalm 73:13-15

- ¹³ Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure
and have washed my hands in innocence.
¹⁴ All day long I have been afflicted,
and every morning brings new punishments.
¹⁵ If I had spoken out like that,
I would have betrayed your children.

Sermon "Slippery Ground" Dr. Pinder

- Asaph felt that way at times, but knew he couldn't act on it.
- He saw things that made him doubt the value of trusting God and following God,
Haven't we all?
- He was tempted to give it all up. Forsake his faith.
- But he knew there was something wrong with that.
How would he find the solution? How could he resolve that tension?

A Reading from the Old Testament Psalm 73:16-18

- ¹⁶ When I tried to understand all this,
it troubled me deeply
¹⁷ till I entered the sanctuary of God;
then I understood their final destiny.
¹⁸ Surely you place them on slippery ground;
you cast them down to ruin.

Sermon "Slippery Ground" Dr. Pinder

- It was in "the Sanctuary" that Asaph found the answer.
- Tabernacle or Temple? (II Chronicles 5:11)
- He saw things from God's perspective.

- Isaiah 6.
- Our *bodies* are temples of the Holy Spirit. (I Corinthians 6:19)
- I Corinthians 2:16, *for, “Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.*
- It is important to come to church!
- But it is also important to walk daily with Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit!

- And see what Asaph discovered in the sanctuary. From God’s perspective:
“Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin.”
- *They*, the arrogant, are on slippery ground.
- Ice storm in Richmond.
- Let’s see what this slippery ground is like for the wicked.

A Reading from the Old Testament Psalm 73:19-20

- ¹⁹ How suddenly are they destroyed,
 completely swept away by terrors!
- ²⁰ They are like a dream when one awakes;
 when you arise, Lord,
 you will despise them as fantasies.

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- *Madoff is in prison.*
- *But there is something worse than prison.*
- Lazarus and the Rich Man, Luke 16:19-31
- There is such a place as hell, and the arrogant, those who trust in themselves instead of God, will go there.
- *The pimps and playboys, the gangstas, the godless.*
- *They are on slippery ground!*

- And Someone HAS risen from the dead!
→ Gospel
- We should tell them!
Pancake dinner.
Little Book of Love Valentine
Facebook posts. (Bring people to church to hear the Gospel)

But let's get back to Asaph and Psalm 73.
What happened after he realized that the wicked are the ones
on slippery ground?

A Reading from the Old Testament Psalm 73:21- 26

- ²¹ When my heart was grieved
and my spirit embittered,
²² I was senseless and ignorant;
I was a brute beast before you.
- ²³ Yet I am always with you;
you hold me by my right hand.
²⁴ You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will take me into glory.
²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.

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- First, Asaph saw his mistake.
- It broke his heart and he repented.
- So we can repent.
- We must repent.
- And look what happens when we do! vv. 23-26

- We experience fellowship with God!
- There is heaven and hell.
- But there is also heaven on earth! Fellowship with God.
- God's way *IS* always best!

The last two verses of Psalm 73 sum up the whole Psalm.

A Reading from the Old Testament Psalm 73:27-28

- ²⁷ Those who are far from you will perish;
you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.
- 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.

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- So there are 2 kinds of people in the world:
Those who are far from God and those who are near Him.
The wicked and the righteous
The arrogant, who trust themselves, and the humble who trust God.
 - Psalm 37:31-31 ***The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom,
and their tongues speak what is just.
³¹ The law of their God is in their hearts;
their feet do not slip.***
 - Which are you?
 - Which do you want to be?
- It's a simple choice. Our New Testament reading for today tells us how to make the choice.

A Reading from the New Testament John 3:16-18

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Sermon

“Slippery Ground”

Dr. Pinder

■ Kurt Warner, Super Bowl 34 MVP

“Success isn't defined by whether you have more points than the other guy. That's not how God defines it. ... What happened on the cross ultimately defines Jesus and defines all of us, and what many saw as a loss was our greatest win. He won. And that speaks to our everyday lives, but it also speaks to our Savior. That's what He created us for, for relationship. And without that, what, at the end of the day, do we really have?”

■ White Card.