

Our Greatest Desire

Through the years, I've had many different favorite verses. However, over the past couple of years one has risen to the top and hung out there for a while. Psalm 73:25 says, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you" (ESV).

The psalmist had been going through tough times. He saw the proud prospering while his attempts at purity were met with pangs and problems. Because of this topsy-turvy situation, the psalmist nearly abandoned God.

But then he goes to the sanctuary; that is, the temple. He witnesses the worship of God. He sees the sacrifices. He listens to the prayers and songs of the priests. He sees the adherents worshipping. And he recalls. He remembers existence is not merely about the here and now. This temporary moment is a snapshot; it is not eternity. The wicked may prosper in the moment, but in the end they will be judged.

What fascinates me about Psalm 73:25, however, is its contrast in this psalm. In Psalm 73:12, 14, while he is still recording his frustration with the wicked and their respective states in this life, he says, "Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches...For all day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning" (ESV). In vs. 18, however, the tides turn. The wicked are rebuked and stricken. Their feet are set in slippery places. They fall to ruin. They are destroyed and swept away by terrors. They experience what the psalmist was claiming was his daily plight, but with much greater intensity, judgment, and finality. Now that we are seeing the prideful and the pure switching places, what might we expect to read about the psalmist? We might expect to hear about his coming time of ease and increased riches. In our modern view, we might expect to hear him talk about mansions on hilltops and walking streets of gold. We might expect to hear him talk about how much he will enjoy his eternity in the lap of luxury, finally getting to learn how the other half lives. But that is not what he says.

Is the psalmist looking forward to riches in eternity? No. He is looking forward to God. "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you." He goes on in vs. 28 to say, "But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge" (ESV).

I don't know about you, but I sometimes have trouble with contentment. I sometimes want the bigger house, the nicer car, the fancier clothes, the cooler gadgets, the costlier vacations. At times, I even think like the first half of this psalm. I'm rarely upset about Christians who are more financially blessed than I am, but the financially blessed wicked and worldly often bother me. I realized some time ago, if I try to assuage my frustration by looking forward to an eternal material reward (mansions, gold, luxury), it doesn't overcome my materialism here. It only feeds it. Further, I tend to think if what excites me about eternity is riches and luxury, I'm probably missing the point and missing heaven.

I want to grow to Psalm 73:25. I want to be able to say with the psalmist, "All I want is You, God. Whether on earth or in heaven, as long as I have You, I'm content." What do you want?