

**Text: Esther 8-10**

The Planned Futures of Mordecai and Haman are Reversed

*1On that day King Ahasuerus gave the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther; and Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had disclosed what he was to her. 2The king took off his signet ring which he had taken away from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman. (Esther 8:1-2)*

Here again we see that Haman, who spent his life seeking his own glorification and the destruction of God's people, was struck down and his goods and position given to the righteous and humble Jew Mordecai. God's Word teaches that the end of all unrighteous people like Haman will be like this, and likewise the end of righteous like that of Mordecai. Keep in mind, though, that not everyone receives such due recompense in this life—for many it must wait until the life to come. Hence, the admonition from Christ to be "rich toward God."

**21Adversity pursues sinners,**

**But the righteous will be rewarded with prosperity.**

**22A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children,**

**And the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous. (Proverbs 13:21-22)**

**13"This is the portion of a wicked man from God,**

**And the inheritance which tyrants receive from the Almighty.**

**14"Though his sons are many, they are destined for the sword;**

**And his descendants will not be satisfied with bread.**

**15"His survivors will be buried because of the plague,**

**And their widows will not be able to weep.**

**16"Though he piles up silver like dust**

**And prepares garments as plentiful as the clay,**

**17He may prepare it, but the just will wear it**

**And the innocent will divide the silver. (Job 27:13-17)**

**15Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." 16And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. 17"And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' 18"Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" 20"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' 21"So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:15-21)**

Esther Pleads for Her People

*3Then Esther spoke again to the king, fell at his feet, wept and implored him to avert the evil scheme of Haman the Agagite and his plot which he had devised against the Jews. 4The king extended the golden scepter to Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king. 5Then she said, "If it pleases the king and if I have found favor before him and the matter seems proper to the king and I am pleasing in his sight, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the king's provinces. 6"For how can I endure to see the calamity which will befall my people, and how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" (Esther 8:3-6)*

Once again, we have Esther pleading for the lives of her people and God's people, the Jews. As in the instance recorded in Esther 7, which we studied last week, Esther displays grace, humility, and submission before the king, even with such a pressing matter. Such behavior increases our standing in the eyes of those of whom we ask favors, according to the Bible, and is indeed required when we approach those to whom we are subject.

**1A gentle answer turns away wrath,  
But a harsh word stirs up anger. (Proverbs 15:1)**

**1Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. 2Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. 3For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; 4for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. 5Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. 6For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. 7Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. (Romans 13:1-7)**

Matthew Henry, author of the eighteenth-century commentary that bears his name, makes this point most succinctly when discussing Esther's behavior and approach.

Even when we have the utmost reason and justice on our side, and have the clearest cause to plead, yet it becomes us to speak to our superiors with humility and modesty, and all possible expressions of respect, and not to talk like demandants when we are supplicants. (Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. 2, 1708)

### The Absurdity of Persian Law Regarding the King

*7So King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Behold, I have given the house of Haman to Esther, and him they have hanged on the gallows because he had stretched out his hands against the Jews. 8"Now you write to the Jews as you see fit, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's signet ring; for a decree which is written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's signet ring may not be revoked." (Esther 8:7-8)*

Although Esther besought the king to revoke the decree that the Jews be destroyed, Persian law was construed in such a way that an edict of the king could not be revoked, even by the king himself. This sort of foolishness occurs in a society in which those in power are assumed to be godlike in authority and wisdom by either themselves or the people. The true God, of course, does give edicts that cannot be revoked, because He is perfect in wisdom, power, and authority.

**19"God is not a man, that He should lie,  
Nor a son of man, that He should repent;  
Has He said, and will He not do it?  
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? (Numbers 23:19)**

Human rulers cannot rightly claim this, and when they do situations like the one now encountered in Persia occur. The Bible teaches us that even the wisest in terms of men's wisdom are as fools in God's sight. Those that desire true wisdom must deny themselves and seek God.

**18Let no man deceive himself If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. 19For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God For it is written, "He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS"; 20and again, "THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONINGS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS." (1 Corinthians 3:18-20)**

Two other examples of man desiring or claiming godlike wisdom, power, or authority are found in the book of Genesis. The first of these we examined last week. Eve ate of the fruit in defiance of God's command because she desired the wisdom promised her by the serpent. As a result of her and Adam's sin, all of mankind became enslaved to sin.

**1Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" 2The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" 4The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! 5"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:1-6)**

The second example of this is found in Genesis 11, where at the Tower of Babel men gathered together and sought to exalt themselves, in defiance of God's command to **fill the earth**. (Genesis 9:1) In this case, God personally intervened to prevent man from continuing in this sin.

**1**Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. **2**It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. **3**They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. **4**They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." **5**The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. **6**The LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. **7**"Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech." **8**So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. **9**Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth. (Genesis 11:1-9)

Ultimately, the denial of God and exaltation of self is the *antithesis* of wisdom. The book of Romans describes the personal and societal degradation that results from the persistent defiance of God by individuals and groups of people. Such rebellion against God and His ways results in foolishness, depravity, and anarchy.

**18**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, **19**because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. **20**For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. **21**For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. **22**Professing to be wise, they became fools, **23**and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. **24**Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. **25**For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. **26**For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, **27**and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. **28**And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, **29**being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, **30**slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, **31**without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; **32**and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. (Romans 1:18-30)

I've said before, this chapter describes ancient Rome quite accurately. More frighteningly, it also describes contemporary America. We all need to pray for revival in this country!

### The Jews Granted the Right of Self-Defense

*9*So the king's scribes were called at that time in the third month (that is, the month Sivan), on the twenty-third day; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded to the Jews, the satraps, the governors and the princes of the provinces which extended from India to Ethiopia, *127* provinces, to every province according to its script, and to every people according to their language as well as to the Jews according to their script and their language. *10*He wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, and sealed it with the king's signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horses, riding on steeds sired by the royal stud. *11*In them the king granted the Jews who were in each and every city the right to assemble and to defend their lives, to destroy, to kill and to annihilate the entire army of any people or province which might attack them, including children and women, and to plunder their spoil, *12*on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (that is, the month Adar).

*13*A copy of the edict to be issued as law in each and every province was published to all the peoples, so that the Jews would be ready for this day to avenge themselves on their enemies. *14*The couriers, hastened and impelled by the king's command, went out, riding on the royal steeds; and the decree was given out at the citadel in Susa. (Esther 8:9-14)

Here we see the results of a policy that assumes godlike wisdom in earthly rulers. Since Ahasuerus could not revoke his own decree to destroy the Jews, the only remedy he could prescribe was to mandate civil war between the Jews and their enemies.

**12Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs,  
Rather than a fool in his folly. (Proverbs 17:12)**

#### The Jews Rejoice and Are Increased

*15Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a large crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced. 16For the Jews there was light and gladness and joy and honor. 17In each and every province and in each and every city, wherever the king's commandment and his decree arrived, there was gladness and joy for the Jews, a feast and a holiday And many among the peoples of the land became Jews, for the dread of the Jews had fallen on them. (Esther 8:15-17)*

With Haman destroyed and Mordecai raised to his position, there was rejoicing among all the people, and especially the Jews. Last week we read two verses discussing this:

**11"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 14:11)**

**28And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)**

Add to that the following verse:

**2When the righteous increase, the people rejoice,  
But when a wicked man rules, people groan. (Proverbs 29:2)**

We also see that many of those in Persia, upon seeing the power of the true God working in their midst, wanted to become Jewish proselytes. Although the following prophecy refers to the restoration of Jerusalem, the working of God and the result in this case are similar, if on a smaller scale.

**23"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'" (Zechariah 8:23)**

Again, the people see God's blessing on the Jews, and want to be on their side!

**29"Blessed are you, O Israel;  
Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD,  
Who is the shield of your help  
And the sword of your majesty!  
So your enemies will cringe before you,  
And you will tread upon their high places." (Deuteronomy 33:29)**

#### The Jews are Victorious

*1Now in the twelfth month (that is, the month Adar), on the thirteenth day when the king's command and edict were about to be executed, on the day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain the mastery over them, it was turned to the contrary so that the Jews themselves gained the mastery over those who hated them. 2The Jews assembled in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm; and no one could stand before them, for the dread of them had fallen on all the peoples. 3Even all the princes of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and those who were doing the king's business assisted the Jews, because the dread of Mordecai had fallen on them. 4Indeed, Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for the man Mordecai became greater and greater. 5Thus the Jews struck all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying; and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. 6At the citadel in Susa the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men, 7and Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, 8Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, 9Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai and Vaizatha, 10the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Jews' enemy; but they did not lay their hands on the plunder. 11On that day the number of those who were killed at the citadel in Susa was reported to the king. 12The king said to Queen Esther, "The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred*

*men and the ten sons of Haman at the citadel in Susa. What then have they done in the rest of the king's provinces! Now what is your petition? It shall even be granted you. And what is your further request? It shall also be done."*

*13Then said Esther, "If it pleases the king, let tomorrow also be granted to the Jews who are in Susa to do according to the edict of today; and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows." 14So the king commanded that it should be done so; and an edict was issued in Susa, and Haman's ten sons were hanged. 15The Jews who were in Susa assembled also on the fourteenth day of the month Adar and killed three hundred men in Susa, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder. 16Now the rest of the Jews who were in the king's provinces assembled, to defend their lives and rid themselves of their enemies, and kill 75,000 of those who hated them; but they did not lay their hands on the plunder. 17This was done on the thirteenth day of the month Adar, and on the fourteenth day they rested and made it a day of feasting and rejoicing. 18But the Jews who were in Susa assembled on the thirteenth and the fourteenth of the same month, and they rested on the fifteenth day and made it a day of feasting and rejoicing. 19Therefore the Jews of the rural areas, who live in the rural towns, make the fourteenth day of the month Adar a holiday for rejoicing and feasting and sending portions of food to one another. (Esther 9:1-19)*

With God's blessing, the Jews successfully defended themselves against their enemies. Note that although the Jews were given authority to kill all their enemies, including women and children (8:11), only the killing of men is recorded. Thus, innocents were spared, as the Bible commands:

**13" You shall not murder. (Exodus 20:13)**

Now, some may argue that the behavior of the Jews in this case was unrighteous. After all, Jesus commanded us to love our enemies—does this not demand pacifism?

**44" But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Matthew 5:44-45)**

While Jesus certainly desires that we love and pray for those who are against us, He also commanded His followers to arm themselves. This can only be taken as a mandate for self-defense.

**35And He said to them, "When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said, "No, nothing." 36And He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. 37" For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment." (Luke 22:35-37)**

Back to the passage in Esther, note that the Jews took no plunder from their enemies, even though they were granted the right to do so (8:11). They acted righteously in that they acted in self-defense only, and did not seek vengeance or profit from the attack.

**19Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. (Romans 12:19)**

Now at this point an objection sometimes presents itself: If God allows killing in self-defense only, and forbids the seeking of vengeance, was God and/or Israel immoral in the case of the conquest of Canaan? Of course, God did, during the conquest of Canaan, command that the Israelites attack the peoples of the land, and in some cases annihilate all the men, women, and children and take the spoil (see Joshua 8, for example). However, the conquest of Canaan was a specific and peculiar case in which God *specifically commissioned* such a military advance not because of any good in Israel, but to bring retribution upon the Canaanite peoples because of their sin. Such is His right, according to the verse we just read in Romans 12. God has the right to take vengeance—he simply chose in this case to use Israel as His instrument.

**24'Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled. 25'For the land has become defiled, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants. (Leviticus 18:24-25)**

God had given no such mandate to the Jews to seek blood or plunder from the Persians. In fact, besides the general commands above regarding self-defense and not seeking of vengeance, God specifically commanded the Jews to seek the welfare of those with whom they lived in exile.

**4" Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, 5'Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their produce. 6'Take**

**wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease. 7'Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.'** (Jeremiah 29:4-7)

Thus, in the absence of a God-given mandate for conquest and annihilation, the Jews morally had the right only to defend themselves. No vengeance, no bloodthirstiness, no plunder.

#### The Feast of Purim Instituted

*20Then Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, 21obliging them to celebrate the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same month, annually, 22because on those days the Jews rid themselves of their enemies, and it was a month which was turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and rejoicing and sending portions of food to one another and gifts to the poor. 23Thus the Jews undertook what they had started to do, and what Mordecai had written to them. 24For Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the adversary of all the Jews, had schemed against the Jews to destroy them and had cast Pur, that is the lot, to disturb them and destroy them. 25But when it came to the king's attention, he commanded by letter that his wicked scheme which he had devised against the Jews, should return on his own head and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. 26Therefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. And because of the instructions in this letter, both what they had seen in this regard and what had happened to them, 27the Jews established and made a custom for themselves and for their descendants and for all those who allied themselves with them, so that they would not fail to celebrate these two days according to their regulation and according to their appointed time annually. 28So these days were to be remembered and celebrated throughout every generation, every family, every province and every city; and these days of Purim were not to fail from among the Jews, or their memory fade from their descendants. 29Then Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim. 30He sent letters to all the Jews, to the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, namely, words of peace and truth, 31to establish these days of Purim at their appointed times, just as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had established for them, and just as they had established for themselves and for their descendants with instructions for their times of fasting and their lamentations. 32The command of Esther established these customs for Purim, and it was written in the book. (Esther 9:20-32)*

Purim was a feast instituted by the people, and not specifically commanded by God. Thus, it should not be taken as being equal in importance to God-ordained feasts such as the Passover or the Feast of Tabernacles. However, the Psalms do command that the great works of God be remembered and celebrated. Thus, Purim was a righteous observance.

**1Listen, O my people, to my instruction;  
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.  
2I will open my mouth in a parable;  
I will utter dark sayings of old,  
3Which we have heard and known,  
And our fathers have told us.  
4We will not conceal them from their children,  
But tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,  
And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done.  
5For He established a testimony in Jacob  
And appointed a law in Israel,  
Which He commanded our fathers  
That they should teach them to their children,  
6That the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born,  
That they may arise and tell them to their children,  
7That they should put their confidence in God  
And not forget the works of God,  
But keep His commandments,  
8And not be like their fathers,  
A stubborn and rebellious generation,  
A generation that did not prepare its heart  
And whose spirit was not faithful to God. (Psalm 78:1-8)**

Furthermore, the provision that this celebration involve giving to the poor (v. 22) was especially righteous, according to the following command later given by Jesus.

**12**And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. **13**"But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, **14**and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." **15**When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" (Luke 14:12-15)

Giving to the poor, then, is an example of sacrificing earthly treasure to be "rich toward God." (Luke 12:21)

### Mordecai's Greatness

*1*Now King Ahasuerus laid a tribute on the land and on the coastlands of the sea. *2*And all the accomplishments of his authority and strength, and the full account of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia? *3*For Mordecai the Jew was second only to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews and in favor with his many kinsmen, one who sought the good of his people and one who spoke for the welfare of his whole nation. (Esther 10:1-3)

Mordecai spent his life acting in a selfless, wise, and godly manner. In God's timing, he was honored for it not only among the people of his land and time, but by all that read, study, and believe God's Word. In this way, he is a type of Christ, the great Example whom we are commanded to strive to emulate.

**1**Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, **2**make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. **3**Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; **4**do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. **5**Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, **6**who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7**but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. **8**Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9**For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, **10**so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11**and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. **12**So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; **13**for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. **14**Do all things without grumbling or disputing; **15**so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, **16**holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. (Philippians 2:1-16)

### The Ends of the Wicked and Righteous: Psalm 73

**1**Surely God is good to Israel,  
To those who are pure in heart!  
**2**But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling,  
My steps had almost slipped.  
**3**For I was envious of the arrogant  
As I saw the prosperity of the wicked.  
**4**For there are no pains in their death,  
And their body is fat.  
**5**They are not in trouble as other men,  
Nor are they plagued like mankind.  
**6**Therefore pride is their necklace;  
The garment of violence covers them.  
**7**Their eye bulges from fatness;  
The imaginations of their heart run riot.  
**8**They mock and wickedly speak of oppression;

**They speak from on high.**  
**9**They have set their mouth against the heavens,  
And their tongue parades through the earth.  
**10**Therefore his people return to this place,  
And waters of abundance are drunk by them.  
**11**They say, "How does God know?  
And is there knowledge with the Most High?"  
**12**Behold, these are the wicked;  
And always at ease, they have increased in wealth.  
**13**Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure  
And washed my hands in innocence;  
**14**For I have been stricken all day long  
And chastened every morning.  
**15**If I had said, "I will speak thus,"  
Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children.  
**16**When I pondered to understand this,  
It was troublesome in my sight  
**17**Until I came into the sanctuary of God;  
Then I perceived their end.  
**18**Surely You set them in slippery places;  
You cast them down to destruction.  
**19**How they are destroyed in a moment!  
They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!  
**20**Like a dream when one awakes,  
O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form.  
**21**When my heart was embittered  
And I was pierced within,  
**22**Then I was senseless and ignorant;  
I was like a beast before You.  
**23**Nevertheless I am continually with You;  
You have taken hold of my right hand.  
**24**With Your counsel You will guide me,  
And afterward receive me to glory.  
**25**Whom have I in heaven but You?  
And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.  
**26**My flesh and my heart may fail,  
But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.  
**27**For, behold, those who are far from You will perish;  
You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You.  
**28**But as for me, the nearness of God is my good;  
I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,  
That I may tell of all Your works. (Psalm 73:1-28)