

Look What I Have!

Psalm 73:21-28

Diana Barshaw lives in Israel and writes a column for the *Jerusalem Post*. She describes a day when her three-year-old son Ben came up to her, smiling and excited. He said “Look what I have, mommy,” and held his palm straight out so she could see. In his hand was a large, dark, hairy spider. She said it “took extreme self control” to keep from “slapping the creature off his hand.” Instead, she said that faking calmness, she gently helped her son to put the spider down on the floor, where her husband placed it in some container and released it outside. That spider was a tarantula (<http://www.dianabarshaw.com/tarantulas.php>).

You never know what is going to happen when a preschooler says, “Look what I have, mommy.” But those words are not always bad. B. J. Thomas’ first album after he became a Christian was entitled “*Happy Man*.” The title song is about a person who realizes that he doesn’t have much; he doesn’t have “a lot of land or houses,” he’s never held a diamond in his hand, and never loved the way he had seen it in the movies. But, he says throughout the song, there are other things he *did* have which make his life special: the experience of seeing “children laughing, as only children can,” a personal relationship with the Creator, and the knowledge that he would see Jesus soon—all these caused the singer to declare, “I’ve been a happy man!” The song is saying, in effect, “I might not have a lot of things, but just look at what I *do* have as a Christian.”

Has it ever bothered you that people whose lives are so obviously separated from God seem to be the ones who never have any trouble? You’re the exception if you’ve never been bothered by the fact that Christians seem to have more trouble in their lives than do non-Christians. Look at people who blatantly, openly live their lives in rebellion against God—why are they the ones who prosper? Why are they the ones who most often have material riches and fine homes? And why do people who sincerely try to follow Christ seem to have so little in the way of material goods?

Those kinds of questions are centuries old. You and I are not the only ones to have wondered about the prosperity of the wicked. Asaph was a musician in the court of King David many centuries ago, who wondered the same things. He compared his

life to the lives of the wicked, and saw how much they seemed to prosper, while he endured so much pain and suffering. They seemed to have everything, while he had so little.

Asaph shared his personal struggle with us in Psalm 73:2-5—*“But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills.”*

Let’s define one of our words here. The word “wicked” simply means “hostile toward God.” Asaph looked at those who lived their lives in open antagonism toward God, and it seemed to him that they were rewarded, while he was punished. So he agonized over this: *“Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence”* (v. 13). He was saying, “God, I try to follow you with my entire life, and this is the thanks I get. Maybe it’s not worth it!”

In his very real struggle, Asaph wandered into the public worship meeting, and there he had an encounter with Someone, an encounter which helped him to clear his thinking and come to grips with questions which plagued him so. As he participated in worship, God became real to him, and Asaph was able to see for the first time that there was much more to the situation than met the eye.

What did he discover? Verses 16-17 describe it for us: *“When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.”* He was enabled to see through the eyes of eternity, and realize that he actually had so much more than the wicked could ever have.

The concluding verses of Psalm 73 hint that Asaph was thinking something like this: “I really don’t have a lot of material goods, popularity and health like many of the wicked do. But I’ve got something else. I have a personal relationship with the God of all Creation, and I wouldn’t take anything for it! Just look what I have!”

As Christians, there are a lot of things we have which the non-Christian could never hope to have outside of Jesus Christ. But all those spiritual blessings and possessions are made available to us because of a personal relationship with

Someone. That Someone is Jesus! You see, Christianity is not just a religion—it is a relationship with a Living Someone.

On that basis, let's look at what we have....

1 We have Someone Who is constantly with us! v. 23

This is something unsaved people cannot say, and one of the most awful things about being lost is that overwhelming sense of loneliness that comes from being separated from God. In verse 23, Asaph sang *“Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand.”* He is saying, “But look what I have! I have Someone Who is always with me.”

God's Word supports itself in this, that God does not forsake the righteous, those who are known by His Name. *“I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go”* (Genesis 28:15) was the promise God gave to Jacob in his dream, and it is a promise all believers can claim as their own.

Listen to this incredible promise from God: *“The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth”* (Psalm 145:18). We actually have Someone who is constantly with us! He never leaves us alone! In the dark, after everyone else has gone home, we have Someone who remains there beside and within us, never, never to forsake us. The unsaved person cannot say that, no matter how many friends he may have or how large his family is.

Because of His nearness, we are able to come into His presence at any time: *“Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith”* (Hebrews 10:22). Just look at what we've got!

2 We have Someone Who gives us a “forever”! v. 24

“You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.” Asaph had taken his eyes off the prosperity of those hostile toward God by this time, and he focused fully on God. He focused on his final destiny, and he knew that he had a relationship with Someone Who promises and provides a “forever.”

The word “take” or “receive” in verse 24 is the exact word used in Genesis 5:24 to describe what happened to Enoch: “*Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God **took** him away.*” Enoch and the Lord God shared such a special relationship that Enoch did not taste death! God just took him away.

I don’t believe Asaph was implying that he wouldn’t die. He had simply come to a fresh awareness that because of his faith, there was Someone Who would receive him when he breathed his last. As Christians we can know and believe the same thing! Even while we love life, and don’t necessarily wish to die, still we need not be afraid of death. We need not be afraid because of the fact that God has promised, and Jesus has promised that there is a place reserved for us. He will “take” us, “receive” us.

That promise is scattered through Scripture, in verses like these: “*Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing*” (2 Timothy 4:8). And this one: “*Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands*” (2 Corinthians 5:1).

3 We have Someone Who is better than anything! v. 25

Asaph said in verse 25, “*Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.*” He decided that his relationship with God, which he had been so careful to preserve and maintain, was worth far more than anything else the world could offer him. He realized that when a person has the Lord, he has everything.

George Beverly Shea’s song, “*I’d Rather Have Jesus,*” is an example of this, when he declares that he would rather have Jesus “than to be the king of a vast domain,” that having Jesus in one’s heart is worth more than “silver or gold,” or “riches untold.” We have a hymn in our Baptist Hymnal entitled “*He Is So Precious To Me,*” which expresses much the same idea. The point made by these and many other songs is that Jesus is better than anything else.

David felt the same way. In Psalm 16:2 he said, “*You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.*” Habakkuk said, “*Though the fig tree does not bud and there*

are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior” (Habakkuk 3:17-18). If I don’t have anything else, I have the Lord, and that is enough!

And Paul said, *“I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things”* (Philippians 3:8).

In a devotional in the *Baptist Record* several years ago, Bill Rittenhouse wrote that while on a vacation trip, he found a suitcase on the side of the road. Trying to determine who owned it, he opened the suitcase, only to find the usual items you would expect to find in a man’s luggage. There was only one clue as to who the owner was: a white box with a rubber band around it had a \$20 gold piece between two layers of cotton inside. Around the gold piece was a band with the words, “Twenty years loyal and faithful service” on one side. On the other was printed “Presented to Otis Sampson by Northwestern States Portland Cement Company.” No city was named.

Bro. Rittenhouse mailed seventy-five letters before he received a reply from a Portland Cement Company, saying that several years before there had been a Mr. Otis Sampson in their employment, but that he had retired. They sent his address. Rittenhouse wrote Mr. Sampson to tell him that he had his suitcase. Mr. Sampson replied immediately, identifying the contents. He asked that Rittenhouse dispose of the suitcase and all contents, except the gold piece. Several times in the letter, Mr. Sampson referred to the gold piece as his “most precious possession.”

So Bro. Rittenhouse returned the gold piece, and used the opportunity to tell Mr. Sampson of *his* most precious possession—his relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He didn’t hear from Mr. Sampson until a year later, when he sent a Christmas box to the Rittenhouse family. Inside the box was a smaller white box with a rubber band around it and the \$20 gold piece inside. A note was enclosed, which read:

“Last Sunday my wife and I were baptized in a little church here in Colorado. We want you to have the gold piece to carry with you at all times. We are two old

people; I'm 74 years old, my wife is 72. You are the first one who told us of Jesus Christ. Now He is our most precious possession.”

Asaph, David, Habakkuk, Paul, Bill Rittenhouse, Otis Sampson and every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ say with one voice, “Look what we have—Someone Who is better than anything!”

4 We have Someone Who gives strength for living! v. 26

In verse two, Asaph said, “*My feet had almost slipped.*” He had felt as if he were trying to walk on ice, until he realized just what he had in the Lord God. So when we get to verse 26 we see him saying, “*My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*” The original Hebrew language tells us that what Asaph meant was “The Lord is the rock of my heart.” People whose lives are lived in hostility towards God cannot say that.

We all face situations from time to time which are bigger than we are. No matter how strong we consider ourselves to be, occasionally we discover that our strength just isn't strong enough. We believers in Christ do not have to depend on our own strength, because we have Someone Who not only *gives* us strength, but *is* our strength! Anchored to the Rock of Ages, we know that our feet will never slip out from under us, that our strength can be renewed, that we can “*soar on wings like eagles,*” that we can “*run and not grow weary,*” and “*walk and not faint*” (Isaiah 40:31). The Lord is the Rock of our hearts.

Listen to this tremendous promise from God: “*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand*” (Isaiah 41:10). And this one: “*The Lord is the strength of his people, a fortress of salvation for his anointed one*” (Psalm 28:8).

Just look at what we have as Christians! We have the assurance that our lives can be anchored to the Rock, that available to us is the Strength of the Ages, strength of living our daily lives.

5 We have Someone to sing about! v. 28

What a difference there is in Asaph's heart now! Before he was a bitter man, who considered giving up the faith. Now he is acutely aware of the blessings which are his as a servant of the Lord God. He says in the last verse of the psalm, *"But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of your deeds."* All these blessings, all these possessions in the Lord, caused his heart to overflow with praise for God. He found he just couldn't keep it all in! Remember that the basic meaning of the word "psalm" is "song," and remember that Asaph was a singer! He had something—Someone—to sing about!

The person in Christ has something to sing about. We find that we just can't keep it in. The closer we get to Jesus the more we want to talk and sing about Him. Every hymn we sing is possible because of Jesus. The attitude of the apostles in Acts becomes our attitude: *"For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard"* (Acts 4:20).

We have the same experience Jeremiah had: *"But if I say, 'I will not mention him or speak any more in his name,' his word is in my heart like a burning fire, shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in, indeed, I cannot"* (Jeremiah 20:9). Do you remember David's prayer of forgiveness in Psalm 51? When David got his heart right with God, this is what he was able to say: *"Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise"* (Psalm 51:14-15).

The Bible tells us that the wicked, those whose lives are separated from God in their hearts, lifestyles and attitudes, do not have a thing to sing about! Proverbs 29:6 reads, *"An evil man is snared by his own sin, but a righteous one can sing and be glad"* (Proverbs 29:6).

The other day my daughter Jennifer called, and while we were having our conversation, I kept hearing the little voice of my nearly-six-year-old granddaughter Emma Claire, enthusiastically singing in the background: *"O precious is the flow that makes me white as snow! No other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus."* She has something to sing about!

Some of the world's most beautiful songs have come from those who wrote about relationships with another person. Several years ago, a popular singing group released a song with these words: *"I've just seen a face; I can't forget the time or place. Well, we just met: she's just the girl for me, and I want all the world to see we've met."* That should be our feeling about Jesus, that we can't help but sing about Him, to tell all the world about His saving love.

Look what we have! We have Someone—the Eternal One, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace—to sing about! *"Sing, O sing of my Redeemer, With His blood He purchased me; On the cross He sealed my pardon, Paid the debt and made me free!"*

Look what we have! We have a relationship with Someone, a Living Person

Who is constantly with us
Who gives us a "forever"
Who is better than anything
Who gives strength for living
To sing about

Can you say these things today? Do you have that relationship? Can you stand in the face of the world and say "Look what I have!"?