

SLIPPERY PLACES ARE DANGEROUS

[Psalm 73:2-3](#) “But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

Ice and snow make winter driving especially hazardous and extra precautions are necessary, for a skidding automobile can cause serious damage.

The same dangers confront us when walking in different places. Waxed floors, oil, water, ice and snow can add to our list of accidents and narrow escapes in life. Who has never slipped and fallen? Who has always had sure footing?

Our text uses this picture of slippery places to describe our spiritual life with its many dangers to the soul.



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1. AN ACCIDENT MAY BE SERIOUS

Why did Asaph, the writer of this Psalm, state that he had almost slipped and fallen? He explains, "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." Since God was his Father the Psalmist reasoned that he should be treated with special favors and preference. Often this is not the case; it is the wicked who seem to prosper in this world and God's children sometimes have many crosses to bear. In the parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus the one "fared sumptuously every day" and the other "was laid at his gate, full of sores." Asaph began to question the justice and fairness of God in His dealings with men, and the Psalmist's faith began to waver, his feet began to slip, and he was in great danger of falling from the saving faith.

Is this the only time a child of God has been tempted by these observations? Imagine the thoughts of innocent Joseph as he sat in the dungeon in Egypt, or of faithful Daniel in the den of lions. What thoughts raced through the minds of the three men as they were cast into the fiery furnace? How did Abraham feel as he offered up his son Isaac? In all the sufferings of the Apostle Paul he perhaps was also troubled by these thoughts, at times.

We must be on constant guard against carelessness with our souls, for the devil looks for opportunities to cause us to slip, and in his jeering way says to us, "Is that the way your Father should treat you, are you really sure you are a child of God?" He obscures the truth of the passage for us, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," [Heb 12:6](#).

We must always walk carefully through life because of the dangers of slipping and falling. It is even hard to imagine the damage to the soul when a person slips and falls from faith.

Only the Lord can lift us up again when we have fallen. David sinned grievously and fell from faith, but the Lord put him on his feet again through the prophet Nathan. Peter denied the Lord, yet Jesus lifted him up and placed him among the Apostles once more. The thief on the cross had slipped and fallen into many terrible crimes, but Jesus raised him to the highest heaven in his dying hour.

Our Psalmist received sure footing again after nearly falling from faith, and expressed his renewed confidence in verses 25-26, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

Why do the Wicked Prosper and the Righteous Suffer?

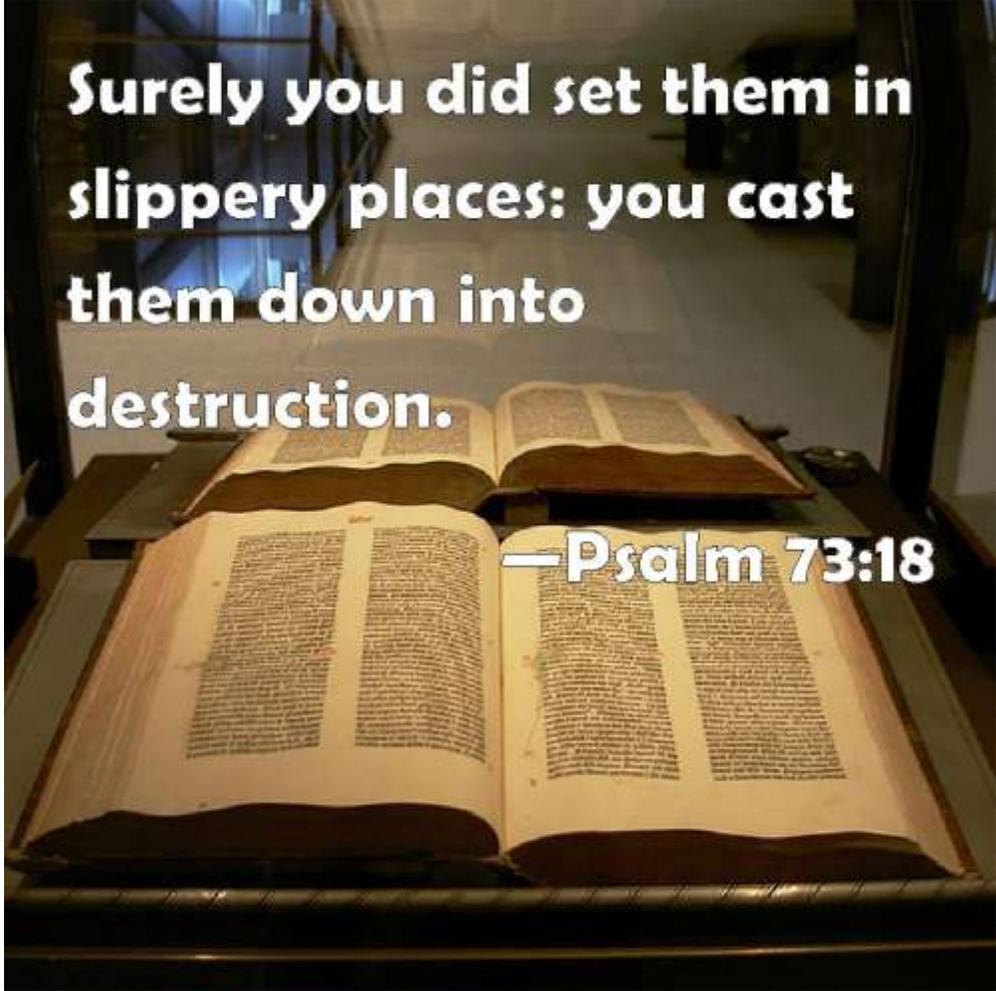
What was the conclusion of Asaph, Job, and Jeremiah?

Psalm 73:17-18, "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end. Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction."

Job 21:30, "For the wicked are reserved for the day of doom; they shall be brought out on the day of wrath."

Jeremiah 17:18, "Let them be ashamed who persecute me, but do not let me be put to shame; Let them be dismayed. Bring on them the day of doom, and destroy them with double destruction!"

What caused this change of heart and attitude in Asaph? He tells us in verse 17 and 18, "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou casteth them down into destruction." Suddenly all became clear to the Psalmist when he considered their end; it is the wicked who are really in slippery places. He saw how God has our eternal welfare and happiness in mind in His dealings with us and that this is the guiding thought of all God's ruling and governing in life. **The Father in heaven permits many things to befall His children to keep them closer to Himself.** Through faith in the sufferings and death of the Savior He wants to save His children, and keep them in this saving faith.

An open Bible is shown on a wooden stand. The text is overlaid on the image in white, bold font. The background shows a hallway with a window and a person in the distance.

**Surely you did set them in
slippery places: you cast
them down into
destruction.**

—Psalm 73:18

Do the wicked really have it so good in this life? How suddenly things can change, how quickly all they cherished can be taken from them. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, suddenly we read of the rich man, “Arid in hell he lift up his eyes.” Can anyone really be happy in this life without hope and without God? The rich fool said in [Luke 12](#), “Soul, take this ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” But God said unto him, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.” Yes indeed, “Thou didst set them in slippery places.”

Asaph became ashamed of his foolish thoughts and reasoning, and repented. He found sure footing again in the Savior and His holy Word. There is hope for all of us who have slipping feet and uncertain footing. The stanza of the well-known hymn strikes a responsive chord in the hearts of all God’s children, “Just as I am, though tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt, fightings and fears within, without, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.”

It pays to be especially careful with the welfare of the soul, for a slip can even be fatal, eternally fatal.

2. AN ACCIDENT MAY BE FATAL

A slip and fall can cause death, depending upon the manner, the height, and the object encountered in the fall.

We are given many warning examples of fatal falls in God's Word. Cain was taught the way of life in a God-fearing home, but he fell from faith and rose not again. Judas also fell and suffered eternal injuries to his soul. Demas loved this present world and fell in that slippery place. Even the great Apostle Paul was concerned about this kind of slipping and falling, for he said in [1 Cor 9:27](#), "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Surely we should all be concerned about walking in slippery places.

In every congregation we see members slip and fall, many of them never to rise again. We all tread on slippery paths, may the Lord preserve us from a fatal fall.

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," [1 Cor 10:12](#). We should not walk through life with the self-confidence which Peter had; we should not put our trust in ourselves, but in the Lord who has redeemed us and promised to keep us and save us.

When we see a brother or sister fall, we should help them to get on their feet again, strengthen them and encourage them. May we show our gratitude to the Lord for sustaining us in the slippery paths of life.

We should ever return in faith to the Rock of Ages who on the cross paid for all our sins, for there we can always find sure footing in the Word of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

AMEN.

PRAYER. Dear Lord, we thank Thee that for so many years Thou hast kept us from slipping and falling from faith. Thou art a faithful God. We rely upon Thy promises to keep us unto eternal life. We say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." We long for the great day when we shall see Thee face to face and praise Thee, O Father, Son, and Spirit, ever one God, world without end. AMEN