

Psalm 37 – “Distressed or At Rest?”

This Psalm addresses the question that was being asked in our study of Psalm 73, and that is, *God, where are You!?!?* It was being asked because the writers of these Psalms (Asaph in Psalm 73, and David in Psalm 37) were seeing the wicked seemingly prospering. It appeared they were getting away with their evil, and not just getting away with it, it appeared they were getting ahead.

Now this didn't seem to be the right outcome if there was truly a sovereign God ruling over a moral universe. This didn't make sense. It should be the godly that flourish and the ungodly that flounder.

So, these Psalmists respond to these seeming contradictions by giving their readers some things to think about. In Psalm 73 the response was to get your focus off the apparent inconsistencies and onto the consistent One. It was when Asaph went into the house of the Lord that he got a proper perspective and saw clearly the end of the wicked and the future blessing of the godly (Ps. 73:17).

Here in Psalm 37 David is speaking from the end of his life and is drawing upon all his experiences and life lessons to share with others that they just need to trust God. He is faithful.

- **Psalm 37:25–26**, *"I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread. ²⁶ He is ever merciful, and lends; And his descendants are blessed."*

Summary Statement:

Psalm 37:1-8 encourages believers not to fret over evildoers but to trust in the Lord, delight in Him, and commit their ways to Him, promising peace and righteousness for those who choose to rest fully in Him.

This Psalm gives us some help in dealing with these struggles and problems that are hard for us to not only go through, but to understand.

Here's what we're instructed to do, and David gives one negative instruction and 4 positive instructions:

1. Do Not Fret – 37:1-2

37:1-2 - *Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. ² For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb.*

Three times in this Psalm we're told: **do not fret** (1, 7, 8). And when we see things that don't make sense, or go against our sense of justice, we can easily fret. Now the way we define that word today means to be worrisome. But the word used here speaks more of being angry, and not just getting angry, we're talking about a real fired up anger. Here's how it's used elsewhere:

- **Judges 2:20**, *"Then the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel..."*
- **Isaiah 41:11**, *"Behold, all those who were incensed against you shall be ashamed and disgraced..."*

So this is more than just a fretting as in being worried, we're talking about getting heated over the problems and struggles you may encounter in life.

- Some of you know what that's like. It doesn't take much to set you off.
- Others are a little more passive aggressive. You know what the first rule of passive aggressive club is?... You know what, never mind. It's fine. 😊

The instruction here is to not get fired up when you see what others are doing. Even when the evildoers are doing evil against you. They may seem like they're getting ahead in their sin, but don't be troubled over it because it will catch up to them. The whole point of this Psalm is really to just calm down.

And it's tempting to be envious when you look at those who are gaining through wicked practices. It's easy to think, *'I could do that! In fact, I should do that! I want what they have too.'* But keep in mind, the outcome never pays off.

David is sharing this with us as an old man who has seen this play out time and time again. So he says quite confidently, they're going to be cut down like the grass. God is not absent or letting everything go unchecked. He's on the big heavenly John Deere ride on mower ready to bring every evil work to account. The wicked may seem like they're prospering, but the reality is they're going to be cut down and wither away as quick as they've sprouted up.

Psalm 129:6, "Let them be as the grass on the housetops, Which withers before it grows up,"

We need to keep the right perspective in front of us. Don't get rattled when things seem to be out of alignment with how we think God should operate. Keep calm, don't get worked up because He's got it all worked out.

Now David says they shall **soon** be cut down. And it may never seem soon enough for our liking. But in scope of eternity, it is just a breath away from the wicked getting what is due them. We need to look at things through an eternal

lens. The things of earth are temporal, our time here on earth is temporal, our problems are temporal. They may not feel like it right now, but one day we'll be sitting in eternity realizing our time here was just a blip – a vapour as James so rightly put it.

And so we need to understand and be assured (as David was) that the wicked will soon be cut down. They're not going to get away in their wickedness. They will be brought to account. So in the meantime, we need to do the following...

2. Trust in the Lord – 37:3

37:3 - *Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.*

The key to having the right attitude toward the wicked, and not fretting, is to **trust in the Lord**. If you have a fretting heart you won't have a trusting heart. But if you have a trusting heart, you will overcome a fretting heart.

Now putting trust in someone can be a difficult thing. Trust often times needs to be earned.

- When my wife tells me she'll be ready to leave the house at a certain time, I need to trust her. That trust however has been broken many times 😂. Trust can be a very difficult thing. It can be hard to trust other things or people. BUT... God has never let us down. His trust doesn't need to be earned because it's already proven! Look at how verse 3 ends:

*Dwell in the land and **feed on His faithfulness**.*

God is faithful. He's dependable. He's trustworthy. He's never not been these things. You can trust in Him because He will never let you down.

Now this trust is not a static, complacent action. It's not trust and do nothing else. It's trust and **do good**. It's trust that moves us into action to keep living for God and serving Him. There's a great Hymn I like that says, "Trust and obey for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey."

- These two really do need to go hand in hand. May our trusting in the Lord lead us on to be people of action where our faith becomes evident by our good works.

3. Delight in the Lord – 37:4

37:4 - *Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.*

Now some people have read this and think this is our compensation for the wicked prospering. If we delight in the Lord, then we're going to get all our hearts desire. There's a new car I've been eyeing, a promotion at work I wouldn't mind, so if I just delight in the Lord and put in my time then I'll get rewarded with what I want. That's how some have interpreted this verse. But is that what it's saying? I don't believe so. I believe this is a call for us to make the Lord our delight, and when we do, the desires of our heart become His desires.

- You see, there's a lot of things I can delight in. But the question is, is Jesus holding that preeminent spot? Is He my chief delight? When we're delighting simply in the Lord, then He's what we're desiring. If we want more of Him then He's not going to withhold that from us. He will give us the desires of our heart.
- "This is not a promise for people who want "things," but for those who want more of God in their lives." ¹

This is such an important verse because we've been made to be in relationship with God. He's invited us in to know Him, that's huge. But we can get so distracted and off focus with the things going on around us. But when we delight in the Lord, we're fulfilling the very thing we've been created to do.

One of the top questions many Christians have is: What is God's will for my life? His will is for you to delight in Him, to glorify Him and make much of Him. And when we are truly doing this, our hearts desire is just more of Him. That's what He will gladly give.

Here's what else we're commanded to do, which is to our help and blessing...

4. Commit Yourself to the Lord – 37:5-6

37:5-6 - *Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass. ⁶ He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday.*

This is similar to trusting in the Lord but it takes it much deeper. The word **commit** is the Hebrew word *galal* and it means to roll, or roll off onto. It's implying that when you have these concerns, worries, frustrations, you roll it off onto the Lord, you commit it to the Lord.

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (2004). *Be worshipful* (1st ed., p. 143). Cook Communications Ministries.

- This is most likely what Peter had in mind when he wrote in **1 Peter 5:7**, *"casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."*

Have you rolled your burden over to the Lord? Isn't it interesting that we often don't release things over because we're not trusting. We may say all the right things: I trust you God, help me God, but then we end up holding on to the stuff because we feel we need to be in control over it, and we just end up being burdened down. God has a remedy – Let it go!!

Give it over to Him, let Him take it from you. Trust Him with it because He will bring it to pass. He will work it out.

Are you trusting and believing that He will do that? Because it's here in the Word.

Part of that working out process may be in vindicating you when others have wronged you or maligned you. That's never an easy thing. But when you give it to the Lord and trust Him with it, you know you're safe in Him. He brings forth your righteousness, or your rightness, to where it becomes evident that what evildoers may be saying or doing against you is false. God will bring about justice for you. That righteousness will shine forth as the rising of the sun removing the darkness, and He will bring about justice as clear as the shining of the noonday sun.

This is the outcome for all that are in Christ. And if you know this is the outcome, then you don't need to fret, fear or be frustrated over the events of this life.

So, if you've rolled off all these things to the Lord and trusted Him with it, then you can do what it says next...

5. Rest in the Lord – 37:7-8

37:7 - *Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.*

Resting is nice. I like rest. And the only way we can rest when the pressures are mounting around us is to rest in the Lord. And we can truly rest when we take this Psalm to heart and stop fretting. To do so we need to learn to trust in the Lord, delight in Him, and commit our way to Him. If we haven't rolled it over, we won't be resting.

When these things are followed, you will be at rest.

Now it doesn't mean that everything is going to be done immediately. Our resting in the Lord is not dependent on every problem being removed, it's dependent on the One who is greater than our problems and who has already promised good for those who wait on Him.

Waiting can be a hard thing. But our trusting the Lord is not to have things worked out according to our timeline. I've heard people say, *'I've been praying about this for a long time and nothing has changed.'* As though God is obligated to act according to your wishes. But maybe the change needed is with you?

- Perhaps the Lord is simply teaching you to rest in Him and learn to **wait patiently**.

Now notice, it's not wait passively, it's wait patiently. That means this is not an idle time but it's a time to keep serving Him and surrendering to Him.

This keeps our focus on Him. If we're setting our sights on the wicked and what they're doing or how they may seem like they're gaining, it's going to bum you out. You may get heated and lose it, and that is never a profitable thing.

It's been said, "Look at others and be distressed; look at self and be depressed; look at Jesus and you'll be at rest."

So...

37:8 - Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret—it only causes harm.

How true that is. How we need to put aside anger and wrath, these things don't produce much good at all, it only makes things worse.

- Corrie Ten Boom wisely said, 'Worry does not empty tomorrow of sorrows; it empties today of strength.'
- So do not fret. Don't get worked up over these things that seem unfair or unjust or are just problems you are facing. Learn to Trust in the Lord, Delight in the Lord, Commit it all to the Lord, and Rest in the Lord.

Points to Ponder:

1. What you focus on will shape your spirit.
If you fix your eyes on the wicked, you'll end up fretting; if you fix your eyes on the Lord, you'll end up resting. Where's your focus today?
2. Rest comes from surrender, not control.
Fretting tries to fix things ourselves; resting leaves them with God. Which are you doing more of – holding on or handing over?

3. Make Jesus your joy.

It's hard to remain fretting and frustrated when you are delighting in Jesus. Have you prioritized your relationship with Him? Is He your delight above all?