

Psalm 37

Life lessons from a book only go so far, though insightful and appreciated, even incredibly beneficial when you find yourself in such a context, the fact is that experience has always proven to be the very best teacher. There's just a different dimension of understanding that comes from going through something as opposed to reading about something. That's why most people seek marriage counseling from someone who's married, because experience makes a difference. People who want to know how to better parent their children speak to parents who've proven to do a good job of it. It's not that they can't get idealistic input from someone who's single, or who has no children, but there's a depth and a dimension to experience that you just can't get apart from it.

Ps 37 is a psalm that comes to us through a tried and tested man, someone who's speaking not idealistically but realistically based upon the experience of his life as he looks back and sums it all up. It's a psalm of David, not of a young David out there trying to get things figured out, but this is David as an older man, mature in yrs, giving us the reality of what he's experienced personally (in Vs 25 he tells us, "I have been young, and now am old). and I don't know what the scenario is that surrounds the psalm, perhaps he's preparing Solomon for the transition that awaits him as the new king. But whatever the occasion this psalm is filled with wisdom, it's almost like reading a chapter out of the proverbs rather than the psalms.

It addresses the age old question that confronts the righteous, the godly, those who look to and trust in the Lord. Why so often do the righteous suffer or go with out while the wicked prosper? It's something that we've all struggled with at various times in our lives, a seeming injustice of sorts. It was a struggle that was all the more pronounced for those under the OC in the nation of Israel because God had promised material wealth to those who followed after Him and obeyed His word. That was how He showed His blessing upon the life of the godly, and shined His light to the world around them practically. To us under the NC that promise doesn't exist, our hope doesn't lie in the things of this world, we have a heavenly hope and our promised blessings aren't material but rather spiritual in Christ. We read in Eph 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ," So if you're blessed materially and/or financially as a believer in JESUS CHRIST that's simply an added bonus that God has seen fit to take care of you in that way. He doesn't promise that to us under the new covenant; however to the children of Israel under the old covenant He did (Lev 26, Duet 28). So the seeming problem of the material lack of the righteous and the wealth of the wicked was even more profound. That's the situation at hand in this psalm, the solution we find to be the same be it the O.C. or the new and that is don't focus on the present happenings circumstantially but rather what the outcome will be ultimately/eternally. For the godly this life is as bad as it's ever going to get, for the wicked it only gets worse from here, this is as good as it'll ever be for them. So we don't hope in this life, we hope in the Lord.

Vs1-2

As you study the scriptures there are certain things that you should be looking for along the way to take in, tuck away and put in to play. You want to look for errors to avoid, sin to forsake, promises to claim, examples to follow and commands to obey. Vs 1 is one of those commands, something we're told to do, or in this case not to do. 2 Things he says that we're not to be about. #1 Do not fret because of evil doers, and #2 Don't be envious of the workers of iniquity.

#1 Do not fret because of evil doers. The word "fret" there speaks of burning with anger, seething, to wax hot. Even anger in the sense of wrath, you're ready to rip somebody's head off. Don't let the fact that at times the evil doers seem to come out on top get under your skin. The bible tells us that, "...the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." James 1:20 2 Wrongs don't make a right, they may be doing wrong, but you getting angry in a sinful, vindictive kind of way doesn't make it all better. It's true, there are times that the wicked seem to have the advantage, you're trying to honor the Lord, lead a life pleasing to God and things keep getting tougher and tougher. They couldn't care less about God or being in any way pleasing to Him and yet they have life on easy street. Don't fret because of it; don't boil with anger over it.

2 Nor are we to be envious of the workers of iniquity. Sit there and think, "Man, this ain't fair, this ticks me off, they've got all the stuff that I'd like to have, and I ain't got a thing. I'm trying to what's right and they don't care about anyone or anything. and In reality we're expressing jealousy. We're jealous of them, envious over what seems to happening in their lives Vs what's going down in ours. Especially considering we're trying to serve God (who we're thinking should be rewarding us for being good boys and girls) and they're not so they should be being spanked and sat in the corner.

David issues an exhortation to us here in Vs 2 basically saying, "Hey, exercise a little patience, give God time, He's not willing that any should perish, He's giving them space to repent. Meanwhile they're filling up the cup of God's wrath and when they fill it to the full He'll pour it out full strength. He says, "In time (God's time not ours) they'll be cut down like the grass, they'll wither as the green herb." Even if God doesn't judge them in a way that we can see tangibly on this side of eternity at most they've got a short season that we call life and then the hammer falls. The proverbs put it like this, "Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the fear of the Lord all the day; For surely there is a hereafter, And your hope will not be cut off." Prov 23:17-18 The implication being that theirs will be.

So why aren't we to fret, why aren't we to be envious? Because their position isn't permanent and God will deal with them according to His righteousness in His time; meanwhile, maintain the eternal perspective.

Vs 3

So to the negative he gives us 2 things that we're not to do, and as we go through here we'll find 4 or 5 things that we (to the positive) are to do. 1st up is what? "Trust in the Lord." 2 Contrasting ways to approach life, you can fret and be envious which will only incur negative hurtful ramifications. Or you can trust in the Lord and do good. You may not get it, or be able to understand it, that's ok you're not called to be able to add everything up or be able to explain it all. You're called to trust in the Lord regardless of the way things might appear currently. Or the way things have played out circumstantially. Again a familiar exhortation from the proverbs puts it like this, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;" Prov 3:5 We're to look to and acknowledge Him concerning our lives and allow Him to direct our paths. "I don't get it," you don't have to get it, just trust the Lord with it. As for your part you do good. Trust in the Lord, and do good. What are we seeing here? Faith and works, trust the Lord, have faith in the Lord and do what's right in His sight, let the reality of that faith spill out and overflow from your life in doing good. Feed on His faithfulness, the idea being that as you trust in Him, and submit your life to Him, He's going to be faithful to tend to and take care of you.

Vs4

#1 Trust in Him, #2 Do good on behalf of Him, #3 Delight yourself in Him. Again the idea being that we're not to be looking to the things of this world to be what brings us our chief pleasure and satisfaction anyway. We're to find our delight, our luxury, our joy and satisfaction in the Lord. Not in the things He gives us; in Him, He's our joy, He's our delight, our treasure. Often times I believe we're guilty of seeking what He can give us, we want more things not more of Him, we don't take the time to just seek Him, to get more intimately acquainted with Him. But as you find your delight in Him, your joy is in seeking Him and knowing Him more, we have this precious promise, "And He shall give you the desires of your heart."

You want to know Him more; He's going to honor that. We spoke Sunday morning about the nature of parable, and they're really not easy to discern on the surface. If you don't have an understanding of it, it's impossible to really accurately discern it. But when Jesus was no longer with the crowd anyone and everyone who wanted to know what that meant all they had to do was ask. Just seek Him on it, desiring understanding of it and He readily gave it to them. Believe me when I say that no matter how desperately you want to know the Lord, it's Jesus' desire that you know Him even more than that. He wants to give you understanding and insight, delight yourself in Him, seek after Him and He'll give you the desires of your heart. Why because the position of your heart will be in line with His.

Jesus said it like this, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." John 15:7 The Holy Spirit through John said it like this, "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him." 1 John 5:14-15 Someone asked Augustine how to discern God's will. and He replied, "Love God with all your heart and do whatever you want."

The idea being that if you love God passionately, and are wanting to please, honor and obey Him continually, then His plan will be your desire automatically. How so? Listen, "...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." Phil 2:13

Vs5-6

We've mentioned trusting in the Lord, doing do before the Lord, delighting yourself in the Lord, and here we're seeing that we're to commit our way to the Lord. More literally the word "commit" here means to "roll." In other words we're to keep rolling all our questions, our concerns, our cares upon the Lord. As Peter said, "...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7 Commit your way to Him, cast your cares upon Him, because He cares for you.

Vs 7-8

So trust in Him, do good before Him, delight yourself in Him, commit your way to Him, and finally rest in Him. That is, be still and stand in calm surrender to Him, and really all these things are directing us to not be preoccupied with or placing our focus on the ways of the wicked, but to abandon ourselves to the Lord and trust Him to take care of the wicked in His way at His time. Vengeance is the Lord's, He'll repay; anger, wrath, fretting, there's nothing good that comes of those things. As you read here it doesn't help, it only causes harm, someone is going to get hurt, it might be you, your family, people you may not be aware of personally who are just in the wake of your anger, but it's an unhealthy attitude that only hurts people. There's just nothing of value in that.

Vs9-11

Of course Jesus picked up on this Vs and quoted it in what we refer to as the sermon on the Mt. There in Mt Ch 5 as He was issuing for the beatitudes He said, "Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth." Matt 5:5 The wicked will be cut off from the earth, and the meek shall inherit the earth. It's mind blowing to think of that day when righteousness will reign on the earth and wickedness will be banished from the earth. But that day is coming.

Vs12-20

The overall thrust of this portion being that we should live according to our spiritual insights, not according to practical appearance. You know the way it all ends, you don't have to worry about or freak out over the interim period whereby you don't understand it all or think it's fair. Hey, when it's all said and done righteousness will reign and wickedness will be no more.

Vs 12-15 There talking once again about the "poetic justice" of the Lord, how God has this way of turning the tide on those who make their stand against Him or His own. They think they're all that, God knows the reality, and to live by the sword is to die by the sword. To sow to the wind is to reap the whirlwind. "Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, And he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him." Prov 26:27

Vs 16 is rather interesting. (Read) Prov 16:8 says, “Better is a little with righteousness, Than vast revenues without justice.” What that’s saying is that there are things in this life that are more important than money and material possessions. If earthly wealth were the best possible thing for you, God would give it liberally to you, but bottom line is that there are things of much higher value. The forgiveness of sins, the righteousness of Christ accredited to you, the Love and grace of God poured out upon you. If you’ve only got a little as far as this world is concerned yet you’re righteous before God being found in Christ, you’re far better off than the wicked though he may have vast revenue.

Vs21-22

The righteous may not have much, but they’re generous with what they have, the wicked may have all the resources in the world but they’re still trying to suck everyone around them dry. There are those people out there who think they deserve a free ride, someone else should pay for them, they’re always borrowing and never repaying. Hey, when you’re in need that’s one thing, but to look for handouts, taking advantage of other people just to make life easier on yourself is something different altogether.

Vs23-24

When he speaks of the steps of a good man being ordered by the Lord, more accurately that means to be established by the Lord, you’re footing is solid...“Rock” solid having been founded on the sure foundation of JESUS CHRIST God has got a grip on you, He’s leading you and guiding you, establishing and ordering your steps, not only in a general way but in a specific way through His word. and That’s not to say that you’re never going to make a mistake or stumble occasionally along the way, but because God is your source and your strength He will cause you to stand ultimately, you won’t be cast down utterly, because the Lord will uphold you with His hand.

Vs25-26

You see Vs 25 is the voice of experience, of a life long lived and looked back upon, and when the debris is removed and the dust has settled the conclusion to it all is, “I’ve been through an awful lot, seen more than most eyes, and yet one thing I’ve never seen is the righteous forsaken.” God is faithful, you can count on Him, and trust in Him, He’ll never leave you nor forsake you, He’s always going to be there with you, taking care of you in your hour of need. Doesn’t mean tragic times never befall us, but that God will vindicate and work things out for us in a way that benefits us eternally, even if we can’t make sense of it practically. Because we know that God is good.

Now when it says that he’s never seen the descendants of the righteous begging bread that doesn’t mean that they never go through tough times.

It simply means that God takes care of His own (again ultimately, eternally.)

There in Vs 26 we read of the grace that often befalls the descendants of the righteous, how that God will often times bless their children and be merciful to those after them for the sake of them. Again, that's called grace.

Vs27-31

What's the secret to a holy life, God's word implanted in your heart. Ps 119:11 "Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You." "The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom (not gossip, not hearsay or backbiting, things that tear down or divide, but things for necessary edification, imparting grace to the hearers) his tongue talks of justice. The law of his God is his heart; none of his steps shall slide."

Vs 32-34

I know we've spoken of this before but I believe it's worth mentioning again. Because when God places it in His word it's worth our time and attention; what I want to draw your attention to here is Vs 34 regarding waiting on the Lord and keeping His way. Often times when someone says they're "waiting on the Lord" that's a euphemism meaning, "I'm not doing anything, nor do I plan to do anything for awhile." But understand that the bible doesn't call us to idle passivity, but rather to godly activity and servitude. Wait on the Lord and keep His way, be busy about His business. If you had a waiter in a restaurant who never came to your table, or took care of your desires you'd want that guy/gal to be fired. The manager comes to him/her says what are you doing, "Oh I'm waiting on them, they haven't come to me, or spoken to me." That's not the idea behind waiting on someone, the idea is you go to them, get direction from them and then do as you're told, you're there to serve them, to keep their way, their wants. So to with the Lord, when we wait on Him, we're there to serve and obey Him, keep His desires, His direction, His word. We're not called to be passive but to be active.

Vs35-38

You've got to love the assurance with which Vs 37 speaks to your heart. "Mark the blameless man, observe the upright; for the future of that man is peace." and Though it may have certain nuances that apply to this life I believe that primarily this points to life eternal with Christ. A new heaven, a new earth, no more tears, no more pain, no more sorrow for the former things will have passed away.

Remember he's pointing to the ultimate outcome, maintaining the eternal perspective. The future of the wicked will be cutoff, however the future of the blameless, of the upright is peace.

Vs39-40

So it comes full circle, trust in the Lord and He'll take care of your life. The idealistic, optimistic outlook of a young guy starting out in life? No, the realistic observation of one who's lived a full life and experienced it personally. David was no stranger to tough times, had a whole life full of difficulties. The only one willing to go to war with Goliath. Went to war and fought with the Philistines most of his life.

When the people started singing his praises, Saul became jealous and David's enemy became his own king, his own boss. He lived a life on the run, hiding out, spent many days adding up to many yrs as a desperate man just trying stay alive living in caves wherever he could find refuge. After Saul's death, David became king of the tribe of Judah, but was at war with the rest of the nation. After becoming king of all Israel, he still had wars with the enemies of Israel, the Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites, so on and so forth.

His son Absalom rebelled against him and once again he fled for his life out of Jerusalem. At the same time he was betrayed by his close advisor, Ahithophel. On his way out of town people like Shimei stood on the sidelines, and threw rocks at him, and cursed him. I mean he was no stranger to struggles. There were times when things looked bleak, but in the end he was still standing and his life experience taught him something. Be patient, God won't let you down.

Vs39-40

Prayer Points:

Father forgive us when we fail to trust in You. If there's one thing that You've demonstrated to us over and over again in Your word practically and our lives personally it's that You are faithful. So may we learn well that we can trust in You, may we be doers of Your word, doing good before You, delighting ourselves in You, committing our way to You and resting in surrender to You. and Lord as You order our steps may we be those in whom You delight, may You delight in our way. As we delight in You, so You delight in us. Oh God have Your way in us be glorified through us.