

Psalm 37 - 2020-11-08

originally preached at HBC in Mansfield 2018-05-13 and GRBC

2018-05-20

essentially written new for post-election week 2020

INTRODUCTION

The eternal Word of God, the only-begotten Son of God, took on human nature, coming into the world a true man, Jesus of Nazareth. He came here to save sinners from the wrath of God. He lived a perfect, righteous life, walking in obedience to God's law, loving God with all His heart, mind, soul, and strength, and loving His neighbor as Himself. Having no sin of His own for which to be punished, He became sin for us. He suffered the wrath of God on our behalf, in our stead. He willingly bled and died, nailed to a cross for our salvation. After He had given up His life, it was shown definitively that He was dead. He was taken down from the cross and buried in a tomb. But on the third day He rose again to life. Having been resurrected, He appeared alive to more than 500 witnesses over the course of 40 days. Then, in full view of witnesses, He ascended through the clouds, disappearing from view. He returned to heaven and took His seat at the right hand of the Ancient of Days, ruling over all, having all His enemies put under His feet. He has sent out His messengers to every nation, telling the good news of forgiveness of sins and eternal life for all who repent of their evil deeds, trusting in Him. He has promised to come again, although we don't know when. And on the appointed day, God will judge the world in righteousness through Him. At that final judgment, He will welcome all who have trusted in Him into eternal joy with Him and with God the Father. He will send all others into eternal punishment in the lake of fire. It is my duty, but also my delight, to stand before you today to preach Him. Today's sermon is from the Old Testament, before the Son of God took on human flesh as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But true religion has always been centered on Him, even before He came, and now that He has come, and eternally when He comes again.

By God's providence, we here live in a state that is part of a republic, with a constitution that has defined our government for 231 years. Every fourth year, we have the privilege of voting, to determine who will preside over that government, and to determine who will hold offices in the legislative branch of that government, and in our state and local governments. So, we voted, and now, five days later, one party is claiming to have won the presidential election, while the other party is alleging widespread cheating in the casting and counting of ballots.

I think there are some of you who handle times of uncertainty like this much better than I do. And, praise God, I handle these times much better than I used to! I used to fret myself quite a bit! Now I better recognize the temptation to that, and fight against it with the word of God ringing in my ears. Yet the temptation to fret myself remains strong! I feel it almost all the time.

Last week, I diverted from the planned sermon series to consider some lines from Psalm 94, largely to address such temptation to fret over the election. I meant for that to be just a one-week diversion, but this week, between my own temptations and what I have heard from others, it seemed best to me to spend another Lord's Day in the Psalms, hearing from our Lord about how to trust in Him and obey Him during this season.

This week I have been leaning on what our Lord said to us through David in Psalm 37, repeating some of the lines from that psalm every time I realize I'm being tempted to fret myself about the election results. I also read Psalm 37 on Thursday to the brothers I have Bible study with in the mornings. I knew to go to Psalm 37 because I had studied and preached from it two-and-a-half years ago. So I dug out my notes from back then, but the observations I had made with you did not seem to be right on target for the present situation. So although I spoke to you on this two years ago, and some of what I say today is sure to be similar, this is a different way of putting this Psalm to you. I hope it will be helpful to all in dealing with the present situation.

TEXT

Psalm 37:1-11

BODY

I. The Troubling Situation

A. 37:1 There are wicked men, evildoers, wrongdoers, workers of iniquity

1. there are all those who do wickedness in small ways that affect a few people close to them
2. there are those who do wickedness in big ways that affect many people, even far away from them
3. but small or great, there are evildoers in this world

B. 37:7b They seem to be winning

1. they are prospering
2. their wicked enterprises, devices, schemes come to pass

C. Two aspects of this that come out in this psalm and elsewhere in the Bible

1. the wicked person gets himself into a place he doesn't belong
2. we then see that person in that place; it looks all wrong to our eyes to see an evildoer in that place
3. e.g. a government official

a) you read in the Bible that only men with certain qualities should be in office in the government; see Exodus 18:21

- (1) men of courage; able men
- (2) men who fear God
- (3) men who deal truly, who are men of truth, who are trustworthy
- (4) men who hate covetousness, who hate bribes

b) but it is very common for people who do not have those qualities to get themselves into office in the government

c) then you look and see them there in those offices, knowing they don't belong there

- (1) of course I don't mean one political party or another; there are people in every political party who do not belong in government office
- (2) and of course I don't mean high office only; there are people in every level of government who do not belong in government office

II. The Sore Temptation

A. 37:1, 7 To fret yourself

1. Hebrew:

a) root: to get warm or hot

b) we have that in English, don't we?

(1) he got hot under the collar; he is hot-tempered

(2) he kept his cool

2. Webster: to irritate; to vex; to make angry

3. to let others fret you

4. to fret yourself!

B. If you do fret yourself, you will be tempted to these things

1. 37:1 To be envious; to envy

2. 37:8 To have anger or wrath

3. 37:8b To do evil or to cause harm

a) same word as verses 1, 9 "evildoers"

III. The Promised Future

A. Of the wicked

1. 37:2 they soon shall wither and fade like grass, and be cut down

2. 37:9 they shall be cut off

3. 37:10 he shall not appear, shall not be, will be no more
a) even if you look carefully where he was before, you shall not see him there

4. every wicked person will die at some point

a) whether young or old

b) after that, he will no longer be allowed to live on this earth; he will do nothing else to trouble his fellow men

5. God will judge the world in righteousness one day by the man He has appointed. He showed who that Man would be by raising Him from the dead. It is Jesus Christ. On that day, he will send all the wicked to everlasting punishment in the lake of fire. The earth will be renewed, but they will not be allowed on the renewed earth.

6. we rightly can pray for God to bring this about; but we cannot know when exactly He will act; He is not quick to anger, but very slow to anger; He is waiting long to judge the earth, that many may find mercy in His sight, repent their sins, and be forgiven; see Ps 103:6-8

B. Of the meek

1. who are the meek?
 - a) 37:3 those who trust in the Lord and do good
 - b) 37:4 those who delight themselves in the Lord
 - c) 37:5 those who commit their way unto the Lord and trust in Him
 - d) 37:7 those who wait patiently for the Lord
 - e) so, in a word, those who trust in the Lord
2. 37:3 you shall dwell in the land
 - a) God will provide for you in this life
 - b) when you die, your soul will be held safely with Jesus Christ in heaven, awaiting the day of resurrection
3. 37:3 you shall be fed assuredly; verily thou shalt be fed; you shall feed on His faithfulness; you shall befriend faithfulness
 - a) whatever good the wicked may be able to deprive you of in this life, by the success of their evil schemes, God surely will feed you, one way or another
 - b) even if you endure times of material want, it will be God's blessing to you, teaching you that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God
4. 37:4 you shall have the desires of your heart
 - a) whatever you desire, that evildoers may threaten to keep you from, or may be able actually to keep you from, God will grant that you have those truly good things that you desire
5. 37:6 your righteousness and your judgment or justice God shall bring forth or make known, like the light of noonday sun
 - a) during this life, for a while, wicked men may be able to make it look like the meek are in the wrong, that they are the ones who are evil
 - b) but in various ways during this life, and perfectly on the day of judgment, God will vindicate you, making it clear that your faith in God and obedience to His commands were good, not evil

6. 37:11 you shall inherit the earth
 - a) on the great day, you will be raised from the dead
 - (1) Jesus Christ died for your sins, was buried, and on the third day rose again
 - (2) He is like the first fruit to be ready to harvest
 - (3) you, when He comes back, will be resurrected, also
 - b) you will be welcomed into the eternal home God has prepared for you
 - c) the earth will be renewed, and you will live on it in bliss with the Lord forever

IV. The Lord's Command

- A. Do not fret yourself because of evildoers; do not make yourself warm or hot with thoughts of wicked men; keep your cool!
 - 1. nor be envious of them
 - a) to see that they have what you want for yourself
 - b) to covet it; to want to get it for yourself by means that are not wholesome
 - c) to have ill will, even hatred for them because of it
 - 2. nor have anger or wrath
 - a) let loose your hold on them
 - b) let them go
 - 3. nor do any evil or cause any harm
 - a) to become a loose cannon
- B. On the inside: Trust in God
 - 1. delight yourself in the Lord
 - 2. commit your way unto the Lord
 - a) I am going to follow Your commands
 - b) I will trust You to take care of me
 - 3. wait patiently for the Lord
 - 4. look forward with hope to the day when you shall inherit the earth
- C. On the outside: Do good
 - 1. your vocation
 - a) the potatoes and meat will not make themselves into dinner!
 - b) your boss or your customer expects you to do what you are being paid to do, no matter what is going on with politics
 - 2. your family
 - 3. the church

CONCLUSION

Next week, God willing, we will resume our study through 1 Timothy. At present, we are part way through “a bishop must be blameless.” Next up is the grace of hospitality. To be chosen a bishop, a man must demonstrate that he is hospitable. Let us turn our minds away from all the convulsions of national politics, to the perfect character of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we think of Him rather than of politicians, that we edify ourselves with thoughts of Him rather than fretting ourselves with thoughts of sinful men.

Jeremiah - Call to Worship: Psalm 147:5-7

Thad - Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:3-16

Sermon: "Fret Not Yourself Because of Evildoers" Psalm 37:1-11

Roel - Congregational Prayer

Benediction: 1 Peter 1:3-5

Anna - Prelude (please pick)

Anna - Trinity 718 "Leaning On the Everlasting Arms"

Rita - Trinity 774 "When Morning Lights the Eastern Sky"

Allison - Trinity 435 "Jesus Christ, the Crucified"

BODY

- I. In this Life, the Wicked Appear to Prosper and to Succeed in Evil-Doing
 - A. You know what the wicked are like, what they do; the bible is full of descriptions of them; you read about them in the national news, and you know them personally; they are all over the world, and they are close at hand, also
 1. they threaten to take away your place, depriving you of your ability to provide for yourself and your family
 2. in pursuing what sinful things their evil hearts desire, they make it difficult for you to pursue what wholesome things your heart desires
 3. they get in the way of what good things you are trying to do, so that you cannot seem to accomplish your plans
 4. they try to discredit you, try to give you a bad name, a bad reputation, so that you are not believed when you speak, or not even listened to when you speak, or not even allowed to speak
 5. they actually plot and scheme against you, and they do so with such viciousness, it is as if they are gnashing their teeth at you (12)
 6. in some extremes, they resort to actual assault against you, even deadly violence to try to kill you (14)
 7. they watch you for opportunities to kill you (32)
 - B. And in all this evil-doing, the wicked seem to prosper and succeed!
 1. they prosper in how they are living; and the wicked schemes they come up with, they succeed in pulling off! (7)
 2. they are like the grass, the weeds, and the garden plants this time of year, springing up everywhere, growing quickly, and looking very healthy

3. they seem so strong in their working of iniquity that they look to us like a large native tree, with roots very deep with branches spreading far around, held up by a massive trunk (35)
4. they rob us of peace, and nothing will restore peace but to be rid of them; yet they seem impossible to get rid of

In this Life, the Wicked Appear to Prosper and to Succeed in Evil-Doing, and

II. The Apparent Prosperity and Success of the Wicked Tempt the Meek

A. Who are the meek?

1. by the word itself: the humble, the lowly; opposite of proud or arrogant
2. by the place of that term in our Lord Jesus's Sermon on the Mount
 - a) you can read this in old commentaries on Matthew
 - b) we were reminded of it by Brother Jarrett last week
 - c) those who are poor in spirit
 - d) those who mourn - over their sinfulness
3. by how they are presented in this psalm
 - a) those who would read or listen to the bible
 - b) those who are not the wicked, not the evildoers
 - c) the just or righteous: 12, 16, 17, 21, 25, 29, 30, 32, 39
 - (1) 17 H6662 *tsaddiyq* lit. right; just, lawful, righteous
 - (2) see Psalm 1:1-2
 - d) the blameless or perfect 37a

- (1) H8535 *tam* complete (morally)
 - e) upright 14, 37b
 - (1) H3477 *yashar* straight (morally)
 - f) (28) His saints
 - (1) H2623 *chasiyd*
 - (2) used frequently, as here, with possessive: *His* saints
 - (3) see Psalm 4:3
 - g) (31) those with the law of God in their hearts
- 4. in summary: the disciples of Jesus Christ; we are those who
 - a) have heard the righteous requirements of God's law, and have come to understand ourselves poor, filthy, wretched, blind sinners before God
 - b) have heard of forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ, who has died for sinners
 - c) have turned from our sins toward God
 - d) have trusted, and are always trusting, in Jesus Christ, to save us from the wrath of God to come on sinners
 - e) are counted as righteous in God's sight because we are in Christ the Righteous through faith
 - f) are always following Jesus Christ, learning His commands, coming to know His mind, and being conformed more fully to His perfect image
 - g) know something of the love of God for us in Christ Jesus, and respond to that love with love back to God and with love to other people
- 5. if you find you are not among the meek, not among the disciples of Jesus Christ, understand that we didn't used to be, either
 - a) we were unbelieving
 - b) we were unrighteous
 - c) we were the wicked; we were the evildoers
 - d) but Jesus Christ has died for the sins of sinners
 - e) now by Jesus Christ, God commands all men everywhere to repent, and to believe in Jesus Christ; in Jesus Christ there is forgiveness of sins, and eternal life in heaven
 - f) it would be a shame for you to sit here listening to the promises of God for the meek, for the disciples of Jesus Christ, all the while

remaining proud and arrogant, refusing to trust in Christ as do the meek

B. (v. 1) The apparent prosperity and success of the wicked tempt us to anxiety and envy

1. (verse 3) we are tempted to fret ourselves with thoughts of losing our place, and, along with it, our ability to provide for our families, and so we are tempted to envy those who are displacing us
 - a) job or business
 - (1) I can't compete in business, because my competitors are hiring illegal aliens
 - (2) so here I am struggling to make ends meet, and the lawbreakers are living it up
 - b) in OT Israel, house/land
 - c) state/country
 - d) position in the family
2. (verse 4) we are tempted to be anxious about how the good things we desire to do seem further and further out of reach because of all the evil done by the wicked
 - a) all I want to do is buy myself a reliable and economical car to drive to work, or a van or SUV that will hold my whole family, but every year they get more and more outrageously expensive because of bureaucratic nonsense; meanwhile the nonsensical bureaucrats themselves take their bribe money and their guaranteed salaries and buy whatever they want
3. (verse 5) we are tempted to worry ourselves with the impossibility of achieving the very good things we had planned, and to envy those who are accomplishing all they planned by unrighteous, unethical, even illegal means
4. (verse 6) we are tempted to fret ourselves with thoughts of how the wicked are ruining our reputation, and to envy them for how many people listen to them
 - a) sometimes the wicked get some inside information about what sinful things we actually have done, and they delight in telling it abroad; knowing ourselves, and the bad things we have done, we are tempted to worry what

the wicked will find out about and tell, and how our reputation might suffer terribly

- b) sometimes the wicked take things that are basically true about what we do, what we say, and they publish them with such a deceptive spin that the perfectly godly and wholesome things that are true about us sound terrible when told in that way; we are tempted to fret ourselves with thoughts of how the wicked might twist our words
- c) other times the wicked just make up lies about us; but the devil is a good liar, and knows how to make such lies sound plausible, so that the world swallows the lies immediately, and maybe even the church doesn't know what to think; we are tempted to be anxious about what might happen when such lies are told, and even to envy the liars for their apparent ability to have people believe their lies, when those same people won't listen to us tell the truth

Yes, they tempt us to anxiety and envy

C. They tempt us also to anger, to wrath (8)

1. the wicked are doing all these things, and it threatens us in all these ways
2. what should happen is that we should be able to stop them doing what they are doing; we should be able to get rid of them; but we can't seem to make them stop or to go away
 - a) how can we get criminals punished by the government officials when so many of the government officials are themselves lawless?
 - b) how can we get liars removed from places of trust, when the whole society is becoming detached from the concept of truth, and is ceasing to care about matters of honesty?
 - c) how can we get false teachers silenced in the churches around us when the people who listen to them and give them their money love them and consider their blasphemy to be the gospel itself?
3. when we can't seem to do anything to stop the wicked doing their evil deeds, we are sorely tempted to be angry all the time, to become full of wrath; to be so

angry at all this injustice that we are short-tempered even to our own loved ones, and begin to take out that anger on others

In this Life, the Wicked Appear to Prosper and to Succeed in Evil-Doing, The Apparent Prosperity and Success of the Wicked Tempt Us, and

III. To Withstand That Temptation, We Need to Understand the Future of the Wicked

- A. the wicked, although they grow like grass now, like grass they will turn brown and be cut down (2)
 - 1. your KJV, NKJV say “be cut down”
 - 2. your ESV says “fade”
 - 3. both are correct; I read that the language refers to the way grass gets dry in the summer and is cut down
 - 4. the old Wycliffe translation captures this: “they wax dry swiftly as hay”
 - 5. that’s how it is with the wicked; they are green like grass and weeds in the spring, but shall soon fade and be cut down
- B. the wicked, although they grow like plants in the garden or the flower bed now, like such plants they soon shall wither (2b)
 - 1. some years our family has planted a garden; one of the things we love is okra; an okra plant allowed to grow all summer grows to above six feet tall, and looks for all the world like it is going to become a tree; by the time it has grown that tall, it has branched out, and is producing lots of okra; the plant seems invincible, being utterly impervious to temperatures above 100 degrees, even when it hasn’t rained for weeks; but in the fall, the first night that the temperature goes below 32, the next morning the okra plant is very obviously dead, killed by just one night of cold
 - 2. so are the wicked; no matter how large they seem to have grown, and how much evil fruit they are

producing, and how impervious they seem to any efforts to stop them, just one word from God and they wither

- C. the wicked, although they seem so firmly entrenched that they cannot be removed, shall be cut off
1. the original idea was that they had taken possession of land in Israel, which they did not have the right to possess; they had deprived the rightful owners of the land, and taken it for themselves; but God would see that they were cut off from the land, that they could not keep possession of it
 2. to apply it more broadly: the wicked shall be removed from whatever place they have unlawfully taken for themselves
 3. I think of Tobiah the Ammonite in the time when Nehemiah had left Judea to return to the king for a few years; while Nehemiah was gone, Tobiah had arranged with his son-in-law to have an apartment in the temple; he seemed very well established there; but as soon as Nehemiah came back, he threw all of Tobiah's possessions out of the apartment and ordered it cleansed
 4. the wicked shall be cut off
- D. The wicked, although they seem to be so full of life and health, shall vanish away like smoke (20)
- E. Our Lord Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, He rose again on the first day of the week, He ascended to heaven, and He is now on the throne, and He is ready to cut off the wicked
1. He is watching over us; He does not forsake His saints; He does not leave us in the hand of the wicked; He is our salvation; He is our help and our strength in time of trouble.
 2. To save us from the hand of the wicked, to help us in the time of trouble, He may cut them off according to His will; in the morning they will be an army pursuing us, but in the afternoon they will be drowned in the sea, their dead bodies washing up on shore
 3. He is coming back one day; what will He do to the wicked on that day? Revelation 21:8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars

shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

- F. The future of the wicked is that in just a little while, they shall be cut off, and shall vanish away; our Savior Jesus Christ shall cut them off, and shall cause them to vanish away

In this Life, the Wicked Appear to Prosper and to Succeed in Evil-Doing, The Apparent Prosperity and Success of the Wicked Tempt Us, To Withstand That Temptation, We Need to Understand the Future of the Wicked, and

- IV. Understanding the Future of the Wicked, We Can See That the Meek Shall Inherit the Earth
 - A. If the wicked shall be cut off, the statement at the beginning of verse 10 necessarily follows: Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be; he shall be no more
 - B. That being the case, the second part of verse 10 necessarily follows that: thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there
 - C. Originally this would have referred to the wicked man, who stole land in Israel away from the rightful owners. When

God cut him off, by causing him to die, or in some other way removing him from the land, the rightful owner of the land could go look in that place where the usurper had been, and he would not be there

- D. Thinking more broadly, when our Lord Jesus cuts off the wicked, whether by some providence in this life, or ultimately in the day of judgment, he will no longer be here in the place he was. By his evil-doing, he had taken some place that he had no right to be in, and from there he was hatching his plots and schemes to work iniquity. But when our Lord has cut him off, he shall no longer be there. That place shall be unoccupied.
- E. So, when the Lord has rid the earth of the wicked, who shall get it? Who shall be left to inherit it? (11)
 - 1. in terms of Old Covenant Israel, the meek shall inherit the land
 - 2. more broadly, as applied to the New Covenant church, the meek shall inherit the earth.

In this Life, the Wicked Appear to Prosper and to Succeed in Evil-Doing,
The Apparent Prosperity and Success of the Wicked Tempt Us,
To Withstand That Temptation, We Need to Understand the Future of the Wicked,
Understanding the Future of the Wicked, We Can See That the Meek Shall Inherit the Earth, so,

- V. Seeing That the Meek Shall Inherit the Earth, Hear the Encouraging Promises that the Lord Gives Us to Carry Us Through Until Then
 - A. (16) The little that you have is better than the wealth of the wicked

- B. (17b) The Lord is holding you up
- C. (18a) The Lord knows your days
- D. (19) You shall not be destroyed even by difficult times
- E. (23) Your steps are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in your way
- F. (24) You shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholds you with His hand
- G. (25) The Lord will not leave you and your children and grandchildren destitute
- H. (28a) The Lord loves justice; so he will not leave you, but will preserve you
- I. (39-40) The Lord shall save you from the wicked when trouble comes
 - 1. He is your strength; He is your help
 - 2. because you trust in Him, take refuge in Him

-In this Life, the Wicked Appear to Prosper and to Succeed in Evil-Doing,
 -The Apparent Prosperity and Success of the Wicked Tempt Us,
 -To Withstand That Temptation, We Need to Understand the Future of the Wicked,
 -Understanding the Future of the Wicked, We Can See That the Meek Shall Inherit the Earth
 -Seeing That the Meek Shall Inherit the Earth, Hear the Encouraging Promises that the Lord Gives Us to Carry Us Through Until Then
 -With Those Promises to Encourage You, Hear the Commands of the Lord for You

VI. With Those Promises to Encourage You, Hear the Commands of the Lord for You

- A. (1) Fret not thyself because of evildoers; Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity
 - 1. (3) Instead of fretting yourself that you shall not have a place, and won't be able to provide for your family, trust in the Lord and do good
 - a) in His perfect providence, you shall have a place, the good place He has ordained
 - b) in His perfect providence, you shall have all you need, and be able to provide for your family
 - 2. (4) Instead of worrying that you shall not be able to have those good things you desire, delight yourself in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart

- a) make it your prayer, “Not my will, but Thine be done;” and “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”
 - b) let it be true of you, as of our Lord Jesus, that you can say, “I come to do Thy will, O God”
3. (5) instead of being anxious about your plans not working out because of the wicked, commit your way to the Lord and trust in Him; and He shall work things out for you, according to His perfect wisdom regarding what is best, and by infinite power to accomplish all His will
4. (6) instead of grieving over the damage the wicked are doing to your reputation, to your good name, look forward to the Lord vindicating you
- a) our Lord Jesus said, Matthew 5:11-12 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. (12) Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
 - b) the prophets were slandered in their day; do we now believe the lies told about them? no, we understand them to have been the servants of the Lord, walking in righteousness and speaking the truth
 - c) the Lord’s apostles were slandered; do we now believe that Paul was inciting riots and teaching against the law and the prophets? no, we understand him to have been a servant of the Lord and preacher of righteousness
 - d) true to the words of this Psalm, the Lord has brought forth their righteousness as the light, and their justice as the noonday
 - e) so he will do for us, His saints, when the wicked slander us
 - f) let us, then, cease from fretting ourselves, and look forward to that vindication

B. (8) Cease from anger, and forsake wrath

- 1. both of the Hebrew words here express the concept of letting something go slack or go loose; anger and wrath are not to be held tightly to, but to be let go of
- 2. our Lord Jesus has a way for us to react to the evil deeds of the wicked, and it is not for us to be angry at

them all the time; man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires; His loving command to us is that we cease from anger and forsake wrath

3. instead of being angry all the time, rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; we read how the Lord shall soon cut off the wicked; rest in that promise, and wait for the Lord to do it; it is not for us to take revenge; vengeance is His; He will repay
- C. (27) Depart from evil, and do good
- D. (34) Wait on the Lord, and keep His way
1. this is as much as to say, "trust and obey"
- E. (37) Mark the blameless; behold the upright
1. you are tempted to take note of the successful wicked man or woman, and to think of how he is prospering in his wickedness; but this psalm has reminded us that the evildoer's future is grim
 2. so our Lord tells you instead to take note of the blameless man or woman, the upright man or woman; understand that for such people, there is a bright future in the Lord's blessings

CONCLUSION

How are you going to deal with the lawlessness of our country, the degredation of our society?

Do not worry, but trust in the Lord and do good.

Do not react with wrath, but rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.

How can you cope with the savage nature of your workplace, or possibly your own home?

Do not be anxious or angry, but delight yourself in the Lord, and commit your way to Him.

How will you keep up the simple, obedient life of holiness and worship, while the enemies of Christ's church rage all around?

Fret not yourselves because of evil-doers. The Lord shall deal with them soon enough.

Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, trusting that He shall exalt you.

For the meek shall inherit the earth.

In this Life, the Wicked Appear to Prosper and to Succeed in Evil-Doing
The Apparent Prosperity and Success of the Wicked Tempts Us
To Withstand That Temptation, We Need to Understand the Future of the
Wicked
Understanding the Future of the Wicked, We Can See That the Meek Shall
Inherit the Earth
Seeing That the Meek Shall Inherit the Earth, Hear the Commands of the
Lord for You

Wednesday evening, 2018-05-09 Psalm 37:1-11

There are many wicked people in this world we live in

- corrupt banking and business leaders

- foreign invaders

- corrupt government officials

- common criminals

- race baiters

- liberal activists

The evil they do

- often is not directed at us personally, but still affects us adversely
- often seems that it could be directed at us at any time
- sometimes is directed at us personally or as a group
- sometimes is actually violent and potentially deadly

In many cases the wicked men are successful in their wickedness

- they prosper in their evil-doing
 - money
 - political influence
- the scheme to do evil, and are able to make their schemes work out

The high and mighty of the world are not seriously threatened by much of this evil

- The wealthy and well-connected have
 - well-guarded walls to keep out the wicked who would rob them to take their money
 - the wherewithal to settle with the wicked who would sue them to take their property
- The magnates and moguls have the media to defend them against the wicked who would defame them to ruin their reputation
- The powers-that-be have the police and the prosecutors to restrain the wicked who would revolt to remove them from their positions.

But the regular people, the common people, the lowly, the meek, have no such protections. For the meek, the apparent success of the wicked tempts us to anxiety, fretting, worry, accompanied by envy

- because of the wicked, you will lose your place, and, what's more, someone else will get it
 - job or business
 - house/land
 - your very state or country
- because of the wicked, you will not have enough to meet your needs (especially your loved ones), and someone else will have it
- because of the wicked, you will not have what you most desire, but others will
- because of the wicked, your plans for the future will not work out, but the plans of the wicked will
- because of the wicked, your reputation will suffer; you will not have a good reputation or good name; but others will

You are tempted to anger/wrath

- those wicked people are here among us, with us, and we can't seem to get rid of them

-as long as the wicked are in positions of power, we cannot be at peace

The Lord would not have us to worry and envy, and for a good reason
-2 the wicked shall soon be cut down

Neither would the Lord have us to be angry, and, interestingly, for the same reason
-9 evildoers shall be cut off

By whom shall they be cut down or cut off?

Acts 17:31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.

What would the Lord have us do instead of worrying and being envious?

- 3 trust in the Lord and do good
- 4 delight yourself in the Lord
- 5 commit your way unto the Lord and trust in Him
- 7 rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him

As we do, what will we find happening, by God's providence, regarding those things we are tempted to be anxious and envious about?

- 3 you will have a place
- 3 you will have what you need
- 4 you will have what you most desire
- 5 your plans will succeed
- 6 your reputation will be very good

What would the Lord have us do instead of being angry?

- 9b wait upon the Lord

When we do, what will happen, by God's providence?

- 9 the wicked shall be cut off, and we shall inherit the earth
- 10 in just a little while, the wicked shall not be; you will look, and he will not be there
- 11 the meek
 - shall inherit the earth
 - shall delight themselves in abundance of peace

TEXT

INTRODUCTION

BODY

- I. The Wicked Seem to Succeed In Their Evildoing
- II. They Way We See the Wicked Tempts Us
- III. God Sees the Wicked Differently from How We See Them
- IV. God Beckons Us to Trust What He Tells Us About the Wicked

CONCLUSION

When the wicked prosper, and their schemes to harm you seem to be working, you are tempted to be afraid you shall suffer loss. The truth is that in Jesus Christ the meek shall inherit the earth.

When the Lord Jesus comes back, all will be set right.

meek H6035 *anav*

Strong: depressed, in mind or circumstances (needy, especially saintly) humble, lowly, meek, poor

BDB: poor, humble, afflicted, meek, needy, weak

LXX: G4239 *praus* (also Matthew 5:5)

Evildoers, the wicked seem to be succeeding

Look at him

Look at her

7 he prospers in his way

7 he brings wicked schemes to pass

12 he plots against the just

12 he gnashes at the just with his teeth

14 they have drawn the sword

14 they have bent their bow

14 to cast down the poor and needy

14 to slay those who are of upright conduct

32 watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him

35 he is in great power, and spreads himself like a native green tree

This tempts us

1 to fret

1 to be envious

8 to be angry

8 to fret

8 to do evil

27 to give up on doing good, and do evil

Instead of thinking of the wicked as they are right now, our Lord bids us think of how they soon will be:

2 cut down like grass

2 wither as the green herb

9 cut off

10 they shall not be

10 their place shall be empty

15 their sword shall enter their own heart

15 their bow shall be broken

Ultimately they will not be able to destroy the righteous, but they themselves will be destroyed

17 their arms shall be broken

20 they shall be consumed as fat (or meadows) burned up and blown away as smoke

22 be cursed of Him and cut off

28 their seed cut off

34 cut off in view of the righteous

36 pass away, are not

36 can't be found

38 destroyed together

38 their end shall be cut off

We are tempted to fear them, but our Lord would have us know God's view of them: He laughs at them

13 He laughs at them

20 He considers them His enemies.

They think they have made us their enemies, but they have made God their enemy

We're not giants of industry, media moguls, high government officials

We are just regular people. We are the meek. We get by okay normally, but even that can be a struggle. But we are tempted to worry what will happen if we are attacked?

If the schemes of the wicked succeed, how will I care for my family?

This land was allotted to my family in the time of Joshua; it is my inheritance from my father; my family works this land, and we live on the produce; we live in the house on this land; what we have is stored in that house and in the barn; if the schemes of the wicked to take our land succeed, how will we live?

"We, the meek, shall lose our land" No, the meek shall inherit the earth!

Henry:

They flourish, but as the grass, and as the green herb, which nobody envies nor frets at.

Three excellent precepts:

1. We must make God our hope in the way of duty and then we shall have a comfortable subsistence in this world (Ps 37:3)

2. We must make God our heart's delight and then we shall have our heart's desire (Ps 37:4)
3. We must make God our guide, and submit in every thing to his guidance and disposal; and then all our affairs, even those that seem most intricate and perplexed, shall be made to issue well and to our satisfaction (Ps 37:5-6)

verse 6

He will take care of thy reputation, and bring thee out of thy difficulties, not only with comfort, but with credit and honour . . . he shall make it to appear that thou art an honest man, and that is honour enough. . . God will, in due time, roll away the reproach they are under, clearn up their innocency, adn bring forth their righteousness, to their honour, perhaps in this world, at furthest in the great day, Mt 13:43. Note, if we take care to keep a good conscience, we may leave it to God to take care of our good name.

verse 7

be well reconciled to all he does and acquiesce in it, for that is best that is, because it is what God has appointed; and be well satisfied that he will still make all to work for good to us, though we know not how or which way

verse 8

do not envy them their prosperity, lest thou be tempted to fall in with them and to take the same evil course that they take to enrich and advance themselves or some desperate course to avoid them and their power. A fretful discontented spirit lies open to many temptations; and those that indulge it are in danger of doing evil.

the approaching ruin of the wicked notwithstanding their prosperity, and the real happiness of the righteous notwithstanding their troubles

the more they prosper the more God will be glorified in their ruin

they shall inherit the earth - as much of it as Infinite Wisdom sees good for them

They have it by inheritance, a safe and honourable title, not by permission only and connivance.

those who wait on the Lord - that live a life of faith

they shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. Perhaps they have not abundance of wealth to delight in; but they have that which is better, abundance of peace

gnash upon them with their teeth - cursed zeal and fury Jarrett:
vicious

The best example I know of this is our Lord's saying on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is difficult to know, from reading just the immediate context, what He meant by that.

In such places, we are tempted to head straight for our own imagination as a guide for interpretation; or to replay words we have heard someone say, who might or might not have been a faithful and able interpreter of the bible. Those methods usually head to strange places:

"Jesus didn't know this was going to happen; He doesn't know why it is happening."

"God the Father and God the Son are for that time utterly separated."

Many of the sayings of our Lord Jesus, which are brief and couched in powerful figures, can be understood by reading the letters of His apostles, in which they expound the Lord's doctrine at more length and in plain language.

Other sayings of our Lord Jesus are quotes from or allusions to passages in the Old Testament scriptures, and can be understood by reading the

passage to which He was referring. Here reference bibles can be very helpful, as can those bibles that are formatted in such a way as to make OT quotes stand out.

To continue with the example I already mentioned, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” is the first line of Psalm 22. If you have never been sure how to understand that saying of our Lord Jesus on the cross, go read Psalm 22, and you will be greatly helped, both to rid your mind of unsound interpretation, and to fill your mind with the profound truth of our Lord Jesus’ words.

The same is true for “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” “The meek shall inherit the earth” is Psalm 37:11. The “meek” in that place are those who lack the power to stop evil-doers from harming them. Reading the Psalm shows you that. But about 40 years ago it began to become popular to say that “the meek” are not those who are weak, but those who have their power under control. Now countless bible teachers say that, parroting what they have heard, make reference to a place in the extra-biblical Greek literature where a well-trained team of horses, quiet under the reigns of their master, are described as meek. Since horses are powerful rather than weak, they say, “the meek” must be those who are powerful, but have their power under control. Such bible teachers, and those who listen to them, would do much better to open their bibles to Psalm 37, and read the multiple references there to “the meek.” In so doing, we can understand our Lord Jesus’ wonderful pronouncement of blessing upon the meek, and take it to heart for ourselves.

You see, when we perceive ourselves as powerful; when we know we are strong enough to resist the things that the wicked would do to harm us, we are not strongly tempted to worry about that. If I were a championship boxer or a black belt martial artist, I would not be strongly tempted to worry what would happen if someone tried to beat me up.

No, our Lord Jesus’ message is not, “Blessed are you if you are very powerful and have that power under control.” His word in Psalm 37 does not mean, “Do not fret yourself because of the wicked, because you are plenty strong to resist them.”

Instead, the message is more like this: “Blessed are those who are powerless in themselves to resist evil-doers, because through faith in God they ultimately shall not suffer loss, but instead shall gain the whole earth.”

You see that in understanding the words of our Lord Jesus, and the words of this psalm, it is just as our confession of faith says in chapter 1

The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture, it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly.

How are you, law-abiding citizens, going to deal with all the things you think and feel as you watch your state and country being degraded by all the lawbreakers around us, when many of the high government officials, charged with punishing lawbreakers, instead encourage the law-breaking and are often the ringleaders of it?

How are you going to handle fears that rise within you as the bad news just keeps coming and coming; as every day you read the headlines and hear the reports that more of what used to be beautiful and good about our society is being uprooted, and whatever is perverted and ugly is being

established in its place; that the evil-doers of the world seem to be taking over everything, and making every vice a virtue and every virtue a vice?

How are you going to keep any sense of normalcy, when it seems that every week some murderous person kills everyone he can at a shopping center, a theater, a school, or even a church?

How are you, working where you do, going to cope with how wicked people back-stab you, use you, take advantage of you, and step all over you?

How are some of you going to make it in your messed-up family, where coming home to your own house sometimes feels like walking into a war zone?

This morning you already have heard the precious words of our dear Lord Jesus, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

In a moment we will read Psalm 37 together, from which our Lord quoted in pronouncing that beattitude. "The meek shall inherit the earth" is Psalm 37:11. There's help there for you. There you are pointed to the great care the Lord has for us, his people. There hope is seen in God's justice and in His mercy. Look there with me, seeking to find the Lord's will for us.