

Wil Owens

Conquering the Fear of Man with Faith in God; Psalm 37

CEFC

4.24.16

Introduction – Today’s psalm is acutely relevant for us. The experience of the fear of man is going to become an increasingly frequent experience for believers as our society increasingly grows hostile to the Christian faith. Everything from the constant attempts to remove all Christian vestiges from society to the silencing of biblical faith and values by drowning out our voice with shouting to dismissing our position by immediately resorting to name-calling. We are accused of being haters and not given the chance to explain why our position is in actuality very loving. We sense the loss of freedom of speech and religious liberty. We feel the consequences of acting according to our faith and our convictions in the workplace and classroom and social interaction. The loud, hostile push back will often give rise to the fear of man.

That is precisely the issue that Psalm 37 addresses; the fear that often arises in our hearts when unbelievers oppose, threaten, and attack us because of our faith. That is the specific issue of this psalm, and our faith will be served well by taking this psalm to heart. Broadly speaking, the main points brought out in our psalm today can be applied to any type of fear or worry or anxiety that we may face. In that light, this psalm is immeasurably instructive and profitable for us today.

The psalm begins exhorting us, “Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers.” Envy often follows fretting in this context because in the moment it can appear that unbelievers are living the good life while we as believers endure ridicule and harsh treatment. In the heat of adversity, we can become tempted to think we would be better off if we simply capitulated and joined the world. David cries out in Psalm 37, “do not fret and do not envy,” and then he spends the other 39 verses of this psalm to make his case that while the life of an unbeliever may appear to be better, it is far from it. Indeed, what appears to be the good life now ends in eternal ruin and what appears to be the troubled life now ends in eternal joy. So how do we conquer the fear of man by faith? Let’s examine this psalm under three headings.

- I. We Conquer the Fear of Man when we Look to the Future by Faith
 - a. The true test of anything is not what it is but what it will be. The true test of any faith is not what it appears to be today but what it

will be. Many things seem alluring at first. They seem loud and attractive, hip and cutting edge, it becomes easy to get caught up in the sway. But in the long run, many of those things simply fizzle. It takes longevity to judge the worth of something.

- b. As believers while we live in the present surrounded by hardship and opposition, it is in keeping our eye on the future that we overcome and persevere and keep believing. We are captured and enslaved at times by what is immediately in front of us. The tyranny of the immediate often causes us to lose sight of the future. It is by faith in future grace that we gain right perspective.
- c. The Christian faith is filled with a long line of martyrs, people who were willing to lay down their lives for faith in Christ. Beginning with our Lord Himself, and every age since right to our present day, there is a continuous witness to the worth of Christ by the willing sacrificial death of His followers.
- d. Why is it that so many believers, down through the ages, have overcome the fear of man, resisted the enticement to compromise or be silent, and have stood firm in the faith even in the face of death? It is in part because they were looking to the future by faith. They were not just looking at the prison bars and the noose and the flame and the gun; they were looking to what awaited them on the other side of it. They were not just looking to family and homes and money and safety and comfort; they were looking to eternal joy. They were not just looking to what they would lose; they were looking to what they would gain.
- e. VV2, 9-20.
 - i. What appears to be the victory and the dominance and the reward of the unbeliever is very short-lived and ends in his own destruction, both temporally and eternally.
 - ii. And yet what appears to be the defeat and the anguish and the struggle of the believer is also very short-lived and ends in abundance of everlasting life, joy, and peace in the presence of God. The meek shall inherit the earth!
- f. This is exactly why Paul could not be silenced by threat and overcome by the fear of man. He had his eyes on the future.
 - i. His opponents would say, "Just leave Paul alone and he'll get over this Jesus stuff", and Paul says, "To live is Christ!"
 - ii. Ok Paul if you don't stop preaching the gospel, we're going to beat you. Paul says, "This light momentary affliction is

preparing for me an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.” The harder you make it for me here, the greater God is going to make it for me there.

- iii. Ok Paul we’ll silence you by putting you in prison. Paul says, “Oh that’s wonderful, I’ve been hoping to get a chance to share the gospel with those guards.”
- iv. Ok then Paul, we’ll just kill you. Paul says, “To die is gain.” I prefer to be with my Lord!
- g. Dear friends, let us not judge our faith or our lives solely by our present circumstances. Let us not grow weary or anxious or envious by the seeming success of the world around us. For it is the end of a thing that is the true test of a thing.
- h. Keep your eyes on where you will be 10,000 years from now, and the fears and challenges and hardships and anxieties of today will shrink and faith will grow!

II. We Conquer the Fear of Man when we Live in the Present by Faith

- a. When we keep our eye on the future it gives us faith to live by faith in the present. Psalm 37 sets before us 5 paths of living out our faith in the present.
 - i. V3. Trust in the Lord. Rely on Him. Depend upon Him. Lay it all down at His feet. Don’t be enslaved by threat and marginalization and fear. Give it to Him and go about life living **for Him** not in **fear of them**. Remember, when we are mistreated, maligned, wrongfully treated, we are not alone. When someone assails you, they assail a child of the King. Trust Him.
 - ii. V4. Delight yourself in the Lord. Don’t just live as a believer, live joyfully as a believer, delighting in the Lord! Know who your Lord is by studying His Word, and delight in (1) every great attribute and (2) every wonderful deed and (3) every faithful promise you find! Delight in Him, and you will begin to desire Him!
 - 1. Live in the present by faith (delight yourself in the Lord) by keeping your eye on the future by faith (and He will give you the desires of your heart)
 - iii. Vv5-6. Commit your way to the Lord. Don’t be swayed or sidetracked by the allurements of evil and sin. Commit your

way to the Lord. Pursue holiness. Love righteousness. Desire godliness, and leave the outcome to God.

1. Live in the present by faith (commit your way to the Lord) by keeping your eye on the future by faith (and He will act).
- iv. V7. Be still and wait patiently for Him. This is the Frank Sinatra syndrome – fear and worry because the man who does it his way instead of God’s way seems to have the good life! Psalm 37 says, “Be still and wait on the Lord.” The believer and the unbeliever are not the only actors in this drama of life. God is the main actor, and He brings this drama of life to its final, climatic conclusion.
- v. V8. Refrain from anger and forsake wrath. Just as the fear of man can lead to envy of him for his prosperity and it can also lead to anger and wrath against him for his injustice. Psalm 37 says if you look to the unbeliever with anger, you will end up where he is, in sin. We can resist having hearts filled with anger toward those who offend and persecute by remembering their end and our end.

- III. We Conquer the Fear of Man when we Look to the Father by Faith
- a. The reason why we can have faith in the future that God has promised is because He is God! The reason we can live in the present by faith is because we belong to God! It’s our Father who makes the sufferings of the present worth it and the blessings of the future certain.
 - b. We trust Him, delight in Him, Commit our way to Him, and wait for Him because, through faith in Jesus Christ, the one, eternal, holy God is our Father.
 - c. We hold fast to the future He has promised us because if He has given us His Son to save us, will He not richly give us all things!
 - d. Vv39-40.
 - e. Dark days may cloud the future from our sight, hard days may paralyze us in the present, but we can always, we can always, we can always look to the Father, for the Bible says, Christ has brought us, who were far away, near to God.

Conclusion – We conquer the fear of man by looking to the future by faith, living in the present by faith, and looking to the Father by faith.