

37.1 WHEN THE WICKED PROSPER AND THE RIGHTEOUS SUFFER: Psalm 37:1-8

INTRODUCTION. Have you ever noticed that many times it seems as though the wicked are doing really well while at the same time the righteous are suffering?

1. Think of Pharaoh and **Moses** when Moses self-exiled to Midian.
2. Think of King Saul and **David** when David had to flee to caves and foreign nations.
3. Think of the Rich Man and **Lazarus** from Christ's parable in Luke 16.
4. Think of the Jews and **Christ** or Herod and **Christ** or Caiaphas and **Christ** or Annas and **Christ** or Pilate and **Christ** leading up to the crucifixion.
5. Think of Caesar and **Paul** while the apostle was rotting in a dungeon in Rome.
6. Think of the Roman emperors (such as Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Decius, Valerian, or Diocletian) and the early Christian martyrs—**Ignatius** of Antioch on his way to the Colosseum, **Polycarp** of Smyrna burned at the stake, **Blandina** and the martyrs of Lyon enduring prolonged tortures, or **Perpetua and Felicity** in the arena—while imperial power and pagan culture still dominated the Roman empire.
7. Think of Emperor Constantius II (and the Arian court party) and **Athanasius of Alexandria**. Athanasius was driven into exile five times, forced to hide in the desert or flee for years, for defending the Nicene faith against Arianism, while the emperor and his favored bishops held political and ecclesiastical power. Here is where we get the famous saying, "*Athanasius Contra Mundum*." "*If the world is against the truth, then Athanasius is against the World*." **BOYS AND GIRLS...**
8. Think of Empress Eudoxia, along with the weak Emperor Arcadius, and **John Chrysostom**. The "golden-mouthed" preacher of Constantinople was twice banished, mistreated on forced marches, and died in exile because of his bold preaching against court luxury and corruption, while the imperial household continued in power and excess.
9. Think of Charles V and **Martin Luther**, while Luther had to hide himself in Wartburg Castle.
10. Think of Bloody Mary and the righteous who suffered under her bloody regime, even such men as **John Rogers, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley**, and **Thomas Cranmer**.
11. Think of Louis XIV and **the French Huguenots**. These Calvinist protestants faced forced conversions, imprisonment, galley slavery, exile,

and even death while the absolute monarchy and Roman Catholic establishment held power and appeared triumphant.

12. Think of the leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution (Lenin and Trotsky) and later the regime of Joseph Stalin with the Soviet Communist Party, and **countless Orthodox priests, Baptist pastors, and ordinary believers** who filled the gulags, were shot, or starved in the Holodomor and beyond.
13. Think of Mao's Communist China and **the Chinese house-church Christians and pastors** who were imprisoned, tortured, or sent to labor camps, while the Party and Chairman Mao held absolute power.

These are large scale examples, yet there are more everyday ordinary ones as well, and likely you have experienced such as this:

A person who is not godly, does not depend on Christ, does not follow God's Law, does not live to the glory of God, prospers in wealth or health or a good name or skills or family, yet the righteous are left there suffering.

BIG IDEA.

Q. What should the righteous do when they are suffering yet the wicked are prospering?

A. Obey Psalm 37. **BOYS AND GIRLS...**

CON(TEXT). *Of David.*

– **MATTHEW HENRY:**

"This psalm is a sermon, and an excellent useful sermon it is, calculated not (as most of the psalms) for our devotion, but for our conversation; there is nothing in it of prayer or praise, but it is all instruction; it is "*Maschil – a teaching psalm*;" it is an exposition of some of the hardest chapters in the book of Providence, the advancement of the wicked and the disgrace of the righteous, a solution of the difficulties that arise thereupon, and an exhortation to conduct ourselves as becomes us under such dark dispensations."

— Henry, Matthew. **Unabridged Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible (best navigation) . OSNOVA. Kindle Edition.**

READ. **Psalm 37:1-8** again.

DOCTRINE. When the wicked prosper, the righteous must trust in the Lord and do good.

BOYS AND GIRLS, When the wicked prosper, the righteous must trust in the Lord and do good.

OUTLINE.

SPURGEON:

"The Psalm can scarcely be divided into considerable sections. It resembles a chapter of the book of Proverbs, most of the verses being complete in themselves."

— Spurgeon, Charles. *The Treasury of David: The Complete Seven Volumes* (p. 1163). Kindle Edition.

Let me give you **TWELVE PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS** concerning what you, as a Christian, should do when you are suffering and the wicked are prospering:

When the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer,

I. DO NOT FREAK OUT OR WORRY (Psalm 37:1a).

Psalm 37:1a

"Fret not yourself because of evildoers;"

BOYS AND GIRLS...

When the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer,

II. DO NOT ENVY WRONGDOERS (Psalm 37:1b).

Psalm 37:1b

"be not envious of wrongdoers!"

- **Psalm 73:17** "I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end."

BOYS AND GIRLS...

When the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer,

III. REMEMBER THE WICKED WILL FADE AND WITHER (Psalm 37:2).

Psalm 37:2

"For they will soon fade like the grass
and wither like the green herb."

- **TRAPP:**
"This proud grass shall be mowed down ere long (Psalms 92:7), if not sooner, yet at death howsoever, which unto them is but a trapdoor to hell. . . [The wicked's] present prosperity. . . is but like Haman's banquet

before execution."

— Trapp, John. John Trapp's Complete Bible Commentary (p. 6493).
Kindle Edition.

BOYS AND GIRLS...

When the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer,

IV. TRUST IN THE LORD'S PROVIDENCE AND DEVOTE YOURSELF TO GOOD WORKS (Psalm 37:3a).

Psalm 37:3a

"Trust in the LORD, and do good;"

BOYS AND GIRLS...

When the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer,

V. DO YOUR DUTIES AND BEFRIEND FAITHFULNESS (Psalm 37:3b).

Psalm 37:3b

"dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness."

– TRAPP:

"Be content with thy lot, not looking at the larger allowances of wicked rich men; who the more they have of the fat of the earth the more they will fry and blaze in hell. Do thou abide in thy station, and serve God's providence in thy particular calling."

— Trapp, John. John Trapp's Complete Bible Commentary (p. 6493).
Kindle Edition.

BOYS AND GIRLS...

When the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer,

VI. DELIGHT YOURSELF IN THE LORD (Psalm 37:4).

Psalm 37:4

"Delight yourself in the LORD,
and he will give you the desires of your heart."

– TRAPP:

"While others delight in riches and pleasures; as if there were no other happiness but to have and to hold, no sport unless men may have the devil their playfellow. The like counsel hereunto giveth St Paul to his son Timothy, 1 Timothy 6:12 ; while others lay hold as with tooth and nail on riches, etc., lay thou hold on eternal life; make God thy portion, and thou art made for ever."

— Trapp, John. John Trapp's Complete Bible Commentary (p. 6494).

Kindle Edition.

– STEPHEN CHARNOCK:

"He shall give thee the desires of thy heart;" [this means] the most substantial desires, those desires which he approves of; the desire of thy heart as gracious, though not the desire of thy heart as carnal: the desire of thy heart as a Christian, though not the desire of thy heart as a creature. He shall give; God is the object of Our joy, and the author of our comfort."

— Charnock, Stephen, "A Discourse of Delight in Prayer," *Works* v.370-379. - <https://www.thespiritlife.net/facets/exchanged/57-exchanged/exchanged-publications/5046-a-discourse-of-delight-in-prayer-by-stephen-charnock>

UNBELIEVERS...

BELIEVERS...

BOYS AND GIRLS...

When the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer,

VII. MAKE SURE YOU CAN SAY, "I AM DOING THIS FOR GOD'S GLORY" TO EVERYTHING YOU DO' TRUST THE LORD AND THE LORD WILL ACT (Psalm 37:5).

Psalm 37:5

"Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in him, and he will act."

– TRAPP:

"That is, depend wholly upon him for direction and success in all thine undertakings and affairs; easing thy mind to him by prayer, and casting thyself by faith upon his care and conduct."

— Trapp, John. *John Trapp's Complete Bible Commentary* (p. 6494).

Kindle Edition.

BOYS AND GIRLS...

When the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer,

VIII. REMEMBER THE LORD WILL VINDICATE THE RIGHTEOUS (Psalm 37:6).

Psalm 37:6

"He will bring forth your righteousness as the light,
and your justice as the noonday."

– TRAPP:

"God will so oil thy good name that infamy shall not stick to it. Dirt will

stick upon a mud wall, not so upon marble. . . there will be a resurrection as well of names as bodies."

— Trapp, John. [John Trapp's Complete Bible Commentary \(p. 6495\)](#). Kindle Edition.

BOYS AND GIRLS...

When the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer,

IX. DO NOT FORCE THINGS THROUGH PRAGMATISM, BUT TRUST THE LORD'S PROVIDENCE (Psalm 37:7a).

Psalm 37:7a

"Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;"

- **HENRY:** "We must follow Providence, and not force it, subscribe to Infinite Wisdom and not prescribe."

BOYS AND GIRLS...

When the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer,

X. DO NOT FREAK OUT OR WORRY (Psalm 37:7b).

Psalm 37:7b

"fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way,
over the man who carries out evil devices!"

BOYS AND GIRLS...

When the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer,

XI. WATCH OUT FOR SINFUL ANGER AND UNRIGHTEOUS WRATH; REFRAIN FROM AND FORSAKE THEM BOTH (Psalm 37:8a).

Psalm 37:8a

"Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath!"

- **TRAPP:**
"Angry a man may be, and must be at evildoers, inasmuch as they break God's law, Psalms 119:134, pollute his name, Ezekiel 36:20; Ezekiel 36:23, Romans 2:23-24; procure the judgments of God upon others also, Joshua 22:18; pull down swift destruction upon themselves, 2 Peter 2:1, Romans 2:5. Thus Moses was angry, Exodus 32:19; and our Saviour [Jesus], Mark 3:5; yet not so angry but that they could at some time pity those they were displeased with, and pray for them too. This they that cannot do are inordinately and sinfully angry, and must at any rate suppress such passionate distempers."

— Trapp, John. John Trapp's Complete Bible Commentary (pp. 6496-6497). Kindle Edition.

BOYS AND GIRLS...

When the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer,

XII. DO NOT FREAK OUT OR WORRY (Psalm 37:8b).

Psalm 37:8b

"Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil."

- **We do not get to throw pity parties.**

Christ has won, Christ is winning, Christ will win, and we win with Him. Act like it, Christians.

BOYS AND GIRLS...

CONCLUSION.

- **XII. DO NOT FREAK OUT OR WORRY** (Psalm 37:8b).
 - **XI. WATCH OUT FOR SINFUL ANGER AND UNRIGHTEOUS WRATH; REFRAIN FROM AND FORSAKE THEM BOTH** (Psalm 37:8a).
 - **X. DO NOT FREAK OUT OR WORRY** (Psalm 37:7b).
 - **IX. DO NOT FORCE THINGS THROUGH PRAGMATISM, BUT TRUST THE LORD'S PROVIDENCE** (Psalm 37:7a).
 - **VIII. REMEMBER THE LORD WILL VINDICATE THE RIGHTEOUS** (Psalm 37:6).
 - **VII. MAKE SURE YOU CAN SAY, "I AM DOING THIS FOR GOD'S GLORY" TO EVERYTHING YOU DO, AND THE LORD WILL ACT** (Psalm 37:5).
 - **VI. DELIGHT YOURSELF IN THE LORD** (Psalm 37:4).
 - **V. DO YOUR DUTIES AND BEFRIEND FAITHFULNESS** (Psalm 37:3b).
 - **IV. TRUST IN THE LORD'S PROVIDENCE AND DEVOTE YOURSELF TO GOOD WORKS** (Psalm 37:3a).
 - **III. REMEMBER THE WICKED WILL FADE AND WITHER** (Psalm 37:2).
 - **II. DO NOT ENVY WRONGDOERS** (Psalm 37:1b).
 - **I. DO NOT FREAK OUT OR WORRY** (Psalm 37:1a).

USES

- *USE FOR INSTRUCTION / DOCTRINE*

- ☐ *USE FOR COMFORT / CONSOLATION*
- ☐ *USE FOR WARNING / AWAKENING*
- ☐ *USE FOR EXAMINATION / TRIAL*
- ☐ *USE FOR REPROOF / REBUKE*
- ☐ *USE FOR CLARIFICATION / ILLUMINATION*
- ☐ *USE FOR ENCOURAGEMENT / INSPIRATION*
- ☐ *USE FOR EXHORTATION / DIRECTION*

HELPS FOR PSALM 37

- **37:4, Psalm** - John Howe - On Delighting in God—Part I: The Meaning of the Precept. - The Works of John Howe, Soli Deo Gloria (3 vols.) - vol. 1. pg. 474
 - **37:4, Psalm** - John Howe - On Delighting in God—Part II: The Practice or Exercise of Delight in God - The Works of John Howe, Soli Deo Gloria (3 vols.) - vol. 1. pg. 565
 - **Baggett, Brett. A Scripture Index of Puritan Sermons: Along with some Scottish Covenanters, American Puritans, and a few of their Spiritual Descendants (1558-1770) (p. 90). Kindle Edition.**
- **37:4, Psalm** - Charnock, Stephen, "A Discourse of Delight in Prayer," *Works* v.370-379. - <https://www.thespiritlife.net/facets/exchanged/57-exchanged/exchanged-publications/5046-a-discourse-of-delight-in-prayer-by-stephen-charnock>
- **37:4, Psalm** - Spurgeon, C.H., "Sunshine in the Heart," #454, *MTP* 8.325-336. - <https://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/sunshine-in-the-heart>
- **37:7, Psalm** - Spurgeon, C.H., "Rest in the Lord," #1333, *MTP* 23.25-36. - <https://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/rest-in-the-lord>
- **37:37, Psalm** - Watson, Thomas, "The Upright Man's Character," *The Sermons of Thomas Watson*, pp. 325-348.
- **37:39, Psalm** - Spurgeon, C.H., "A Testimony to Free and Sovereign Grace," #1953, *MTP* 33.157-168.

OVERVIEWS OF PSALM 37

- **MATTHEW HENRY:**

"This psalm is a sermon, and an excellent useful sermon it is, calculated not (as most of the psalms) for our devotion, but for our conversation; there is nothing in it of prayer or praise, but it is all instruction; it is "*Maschil – a teaching psalm*;" it is an exposition of some of the hardest chapters in the book of Providence, the advancement of the wicked and the disgrace of the righteous, a solution of the difficulties that arise thereupon, and an exhortation to conduct ourselves as becomes us under such dark dispensations."

— Henry, Matthew. **Unabridged Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible (best navigation) . OSNOVA. Kindle Edition.**

- **CALVIN:**

"Although the people of God are afflicted for a time, yet the issue of their afflictions shall be such, that they have every reason to be contented with their lot. Now all this depends upon the providence of God; for unless we are persuaded that the world is governed by him in righteousness and truth, our minds will soon stagger, and at length entirely fail us."

— Calvin, John. **Calvin On The Bible: John Calvin's Bible Commentary (p. 2991). Kindle Edition.**

- **POOLE:**

"The design of this Psalm is to defend the providence of God, and to satisfy the minds of men in that great question, concerning the seeming inequality of God's dispensations, in afflicting good men, and giving prosperity to the worst of men; and to instruct God's people how to demean themselves in their present condition, and what supports and comforts they have in it. The psalmist persuades to patience and confidence in God, Psalms 37:1-8; and sheweth the different state of the godly and wicked in all their dealings, Psalms 37:9-40."

— Poole, Matthew. **English Annotations on the Holy Bible . E4 Group. Kindle Edition.**

- **TRAPP:**

"He wrote this thirty-seventh psalm for the good of God's people; lest they, being scandalized in like manner, and stumbling at the same stone that he had done, should want direction, and so fall into inconvenience,

temptation, and a snare." — **Trapp, John. John Trapp's Complete Bible Commentary (p. 6491). Kindle Edition.**

– **GILL:**

"This psalm. . .describes the different states of good and bad men; and is full of exhortations, instructions, and advice to the people of God; intermixed with various encouraging promises." — **Gill, John. Gill's Bible Commentary . OSNOVA. Kindle Edition.**

– **SPURGEON:**

"SUBJECT. The great riddle of the prosperity of the wicked and the affliction of the righteous, which has perplexed so many, is here dealt with in the light of the future; and fretfulness and repining are most impressively forbidden. It is a Psalm in which the Lord hushes most sweetly the too common repinings of his people, and calms their minds as to his present dealings with his own chosen flock, and the wolves by whom they are surrounded. It contains eight great precepts, is twice illustrated by autobiographical statements, and abounds in remarkable contrasts. . . . The Psalm can scarcely be divided into considerable sections. It resembles a chapter of the book of Proverbs, most of the verses being complete in themselves."

— **Spurgeon, Charles. The Treasury of David: The Complete Seven Volumes (p. 1163). Kindle Edition.**

WILLIAM S. PLUMER'S DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL REMARKS

1. We should never deny that God's providence is mysterious. Not only do mercies and judgments often seem to fall without discrimination on saints and sinners; but many a time the wicked seem to have much prosperity, while the righteous are greatly afflicted. Let us not deny the facts; but let us not be perplexed by them. All will be clear in due time.
2. We cannot too carefully watch against the insidious attacks of evil tempers. Even a little indulgence in irritability will torment us and displease God. We may not even fret. So earnest is the prophet on this point that he thrice warns us, verses 1, 7, 8. Bouchier: "We do not perhaps lay much stress on fretfulness as evil: we look upon it more as an unhappy temper of mind, bringing indeed its own punishment with it, but involving no vast amount of evil ... Yet fretfulness, unchecked and allowed to have its way undisturbed, will eventually undermine and corrode all

that is valuable and estimable and lovely in the character." Fretting leads to:

3. Envy, verse 1. When one becomes emulous of the prosperity of others, and sickens at their success, then he is nigh unto ruin. There is no worse passion than envy. It is foolish and cruel. All prosperous sinners are like oxen fattening for the slaughter.
4. The prosperity of the wicked affords no just cause for the least disquiet. However great, it is short-lived and is a just cause of pity, not of alarm or ill-will, verses 2, 9, 10, 13, 20, 34, 35, 36, 38. We brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Morison: "Both the name and the place of the wicked shall be blotted out and forgotten. Yet a little while and he is gone; his vain pomp and glory are levelled in the dust; and a future generation shall search in vain for the place of his abode: he shall have no memorial but such as his crime and infamy have procured for him."
5. It is impossible to live well or die well, to profit by God's Word or providences, unless we trust in the Lord, verses 3, 5.
6. Negative virtue is not enough; we must do good, verses 3, 27. He who regards his condition safe, because he does not lie, or steal, or murder, or practise any of the vices, and yet has not grace to perfect holiness and work out his salvation with fear and trembling, is deceived.
7. Great as are the trials of God's people, their temporal wants are supplied, and oftentimes in a marvellous manner, verse 3. After all his afflictions, who in the main passes through this world in a more quiet and desirable way than the child of God?
8. True religion calls into lively exercise the highest and most refined affections of our nature, and presents suitable objects for them to settle upon. We may well and wholly delight ourselves in the Lord and in the fulness of his blessings, verses 4, 8. Nor is such piety unrequited. Morison: "When we learn greatly to delight in the Lord, he will grant unto us the desire of our souls. The heart that delights in God will learn to relish and approve all his appointments; for he that prays from the heart, 'Thy will be done,' can never fail to realise the blessing he implores." God gratifies the desires of the saints, for he has awakened them, and he approves them.
9. True piety relies on God, and rolls its burden on the Lord, verse 5. What could we do without such a resource? They who rely most are the best and the happiest Christians.
10. He who makes God his refuge, has a right to expect that his lawful undertakings will be finally crowned with more than ordinary success, although for a time things may look dark, verse 5.

11. It is always safe to leave a good cause and our good name in the hands of God, verse 6. Henry: "If we take care to keep a good conscience, we may leave it to God to take care of our good name." Reproach is terrible. It broke the heart of the Son of man. But the just shall at last be delivered from it. Morison: "By ten thousand agencies God can extricate his servants from unmerited contempt and can bring forth their integrity as the morning light."
12. True repose is had only when our hearts are hushed on the bosom of Jehovah and rest in him, verse 7. The right place for the brood in time of cold or storm is under the wings of the hen. The right place for the lambs in chilly weather is the shepherd's bosom.
13. Nicolson thus sums up the duties taught in verses 3-8. "Desert not thy station. Enjoy quietly what thou hast at present. Be pleased with God's way, labour in an honest vocation, and leave the rest to him. Acquiesce in his will and in the dispensations of his providence; wait patiently for him. His time is best."
14. Patient waiting on God must be a very important duty, and one to which we are but little inclined; it is so often enjoined in Scripture, verses 7, 9, 34.
15. Fretting and envy naturally lead to the display of the worst passions, even outrageous anger, and terrible wrath, against which we cannot be too guarded, verse 8.

— [Plumer, William Swan. Studies in the Book of Psalms \(pp. 811-813\). Counted Faithful. Kindle Edition.](#)

THE REST OF PSALM 37

Psalm 37:9-40

- 9 For the evildoers shall be cut off,
but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.
- 10 In just a little while, the wicked will be no more;
though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there.
- 11 But the meek shall inherit the land
and delight themselves in abundant peace.
- 12 The wicked plots against the righteous
and gnashes his teeth at him,
- 13 but the Lord laughs at the wicked,
for he sees that his day is coming.
- 14 The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows
to bring down the poor and needy,

to slay those whose way is upright;
15 their sword shall enter their own heart,
and their bows shall be broken.
16 Better is the little that the righteous has
than the abundance of many wicked.
17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken,
but the Lord upholds the righteous.
18 The Lord knows the days of the blameless,
and their heritage will remain forever;
19 they are not put to shame in evil times;
in the days of famine they have abundance.
20 But the wicked will perish;
the enemies of the Lord are like the glory of the pastures;
they vanish—like smoke they vanish away.
21 The wicked borrows but does not pay back,
but the righteous is generous and gives;
22 for those blessed by the Lord shall inherit the land,
but those cursed by him shall be cut off.
23 The steps of a man are established by the Lord,
when he delights in his way;
24 though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong,
for the Lord upholds his hand.
25 I have been young, and now am old,
yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
or his children begging for bread.
26 He is ever lending generously,
and his children become a blessing.
27 Turn away from evil and do good;
so shall you dwell forever.
28 For the Lord loves justice;
he will not forsake his saints.
They are preserved forever,
but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.
29 The righteous shall inherit the land
and dwell upon it forever.
30 The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom,
and his tongue speaks justice.
31 The law of his God is in his heart;
his steps do not slip.
32 The wicked watches for the righteous
and seeks to put him to death.
33 The Lord will not abandon him to his power
or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial.
34 Wait for the Lord and keep his way,

and he will exalt you to inherit the land;
you will look on when the wicked are cut off.
35 I have seen a wicked, ruthless man,
spreading himself like a green laurel tree.
36 But he passed away, and behold, he was no more;
though I sought him, he could not be found.
37 Mark the blameless and behold the upright,
for there is a future for the man of peace.
38 But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed;
the future of the wicked shall be cut off.
39 The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord;
he is their stronghold in the time of trouble.
40 The Lord helps them and delivers them;
he delivers them from the wicked and saves them,
because they take refuge in him.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Opening Reflection: The Problem of the Prospering Wicked

1. The sermon opens with many historical examples (Pharaoh and Moses, Saul and David, the rich man and Lazarus, early Christian martyrs, Athanasius, Chrysostom, Luther, the Huguenots, Soviet and Chinese believers, etc.). Which of these examples most vividly illustrates the tension between the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous for you? Why?
2. Beyond the large-scale examples, the preacher mentions ordinary, everyday situations in which the ungodly prosper in wealth, health, reputation, skills, or family while the righteous suffer. Have you personally experienced or observed this? How did it affect your thoughts, emotions, or faith?
3. What is the central question the sermon seeks to answer from Psalm 37? Why is this question so important for Christians in every age?

The Nature and Purpose of Psalm 37

1. Psalm 37 is described as an acrostic poem of instruction written by David, with no explicit prayer or praise. How does Matthew Henry describe it, and what does this teach us about the kinds of songs Christians may sing to the glory of God?
2. Why does the preacher say Psalm 37 rebukes the idea that every

Christian song or psalm must focus solely on who God is or what He has done in salvation? How can songs of exhortation still glorify God?

Main Doctrine

1. State the main doctrine drawn from verses 1–8 in your own words. How does this doctrine summarize the Christian response when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer?
2. The preacher notes that three of the twelve directions are essentially the same ("Fret not"). Why do you think David (and the Holy Spirit) repeats this command so often?

The Twelve Practical Directions

Negative Commands (What Not to Do)

1. Direction 1, 10 & 12 – "Fret not" (vv. 1a, 7b, 8b). What does it mean to "fret" or "freak out and worry"? Why is this the first and most repeated direction? How does fretting tend only to evil (v. 8)?
2. Direction 2 – "Be not envious of wrongdoers" (v. 1b). Why is envy of the prospering wicked such a strong temptation? How does Psalm 73:17 help us fight it?
3. Direction 3 – Remember that the wicked will fade and wither (v. 2). How does the image of grass and the green herb, along with the story of Haman, serve as an antidote to both fretting and envy? What contrast does the preacher draw between the future of the wicked and the future of those who have Christ's righteousness?

Positive Commands (What to Do)

4. Direction 4 – Trust in the Lord and do good (v. 3a). What does trusting the Lord's providence look like practically when circumstances make no sense? How can suffering and the prosperity of the wicked distract us from the good works God has prepared for us (Ephesians 2:10)?
5. Direction 5 – Dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness (v. 3b). What does it mean to "befriend faithfulness" or "feed on faithfulness"? Why does the preacher say so much chaos in people's lives stems from neglecting ordinary, everyday duties in one's God-given station?
6. Direction 6 – Delight yourself in the Lord (v. 4). How is this verse often misused in prosperity or "word of faith" teaching? What is the true meaning according to the sermon? How does making the Lord your chief delight guarantee that you still receive "the desires of your heart" even in suffering?
7. Direction 7 – Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will act (v. 5). How can you practically test whether you are committing your way to

the Lord (including even simple things like a Sunday afternoon nap)?
What is the relationship between our faithfulness and the Lord's acting?

8. Direction 8 – Remember that the Lord will vindicate the righteous (v. 6).
What kind of "righteousness" is in view here (not the imputed righteousness of Christ)? How does the example of Job illustrate the temporary obscuring of a believer's practical righteousness? What hope does John Trapp's comment about a "resurrection of names" give?
9. Direction 9 – Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him (v. 7a).
What does it mean to refuse to "force things through pragmatism"? Why is waiting especially hard when the wicked appear to be winning?
10. Direction 11 – Refrain from anger and forsake wrath (v. 8a). How does the preacher carefully distinguish between righteous anger (which Scripture commands) and sinful anger/wrath? Why is the ability to pity and pray for those who anger us a key test of whether our anger is righteous? How does the need to be taught the Bible (rather than only reading it alone) help us handle verses like this correctly?

Application for Believers and Unbelievers

1. For believers currently experiencing this tension: Which of the twelve directions do you most need to hear and obey right now? Which one is hardest for you?
2. How can these directions equip you to encourage and exhort other Christians who are presently suffering while watching the ungodly prosper?
3. For unbelievers: The sermon repeatedly points to the fading of the wicked (v. 2) and the open invitation of Christ ("Come to me..."). What is the urgent warning and the gracious invitation given to those still outside of Christ?
4. The preacher concludes: "Christ has won. Christ is winning. Christ will win and we will win with him... Jesus has got this. Jesus has got us. So, let us march forward in faith." How should this confidence shape the way Christians live, speak, and respond in an anxious culture (including election seasons)?

Personal Reflection and Response

1. Take time to examine your own heart: In what specific ways have you been tempted to fret, envy, force outcomes, or indulge sinful anger when the wicked prosper? Confess these and ask for grace to obey the positive commands.
2. Choose one or two of the positive directions (trust and do good, befriend faithfulness, delight in the Lord, commit your way, wait patiently, etc.) and

write out a concrete plan for practicing them this week.

3. How does meditating on the future vindication of the righteous and the certain fading of the wicked free you to focus on ordinary faithfulness today?
4. Close by praying through the sermon's closing prayer, asking God to help you and your group obey Psalm 37 for His glory.

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Have you ever noticed that many times it seems as though the wicked are doing really well while at the same time the righteous are suffering. Think of Pharaoh and Moses when Moses self-exiled to Midian. Think of King Saul and David when David had to flee to caves and foreign nations. Think of the rich man and Lazarus from Christ's parable in Luke 16. Think of the Jews and Christ or Herod and Christ or Caiaphas and Christ or Annas and Christ or Pilate and Christ especially leading up to the crucifixion of Christ. Think of Caesar and Paul while the apostle was rotting in a dungeon in Rome. Think of the Roman emperors such as Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Decius, Valerian or Diocletian and the early Christian martyrs. The martyrs such as Ignatius of Antioch on his way to the Colosseum to be killed. Polycarp of Smyrna who was burned at the stake. Blandina and the martyrs of Lyons who endured prolonged tortures. Or think of Perpetua and Felicity in the arena. While the imperial power and pagan culture still dominated the Roman Empire, think of Emperor Constantius II and the Arian Court party and Athanasius of Alexandria. Athanasius was driven into exile five times, forced to hide in the desert or flee for years for simply defending the Christian faith, for defending the Nicene faith against the heresy of Arianism. While the emperor and his favored bishops held political and ecclesiastical power. And the story of Athanasius is where we get that famous saying, Athanasius contra mundum, which simply means Athanasius against the world. The reason that became a thing is because Athanasius was standing up against everyone, standing up against the emperor, standing up against the Arian party who were teaching a Christological heresy. And they said, "You are taking on everyone." And Athanasius said, "If the world is against the truth, then Athanasius is against the world." And he lived a very difficult and hard life because of it. Think of Empress Eudoxia along with the weak emperor Arcadius and John Chrysostom, the golden mouthed preacher of Constantinople. He was banished twice, mistreated on forced marches, and died in exile because of his bold preaching against court, luxury, and corruption, while the imperial household continued in power and excess. Think of Charles V and Martin Luther. Luther had to hide himself in Wartburg Castle. Think of Bloody Mary and the righteous who suffered under her bloody regime. Even such men as John Rogers, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, and Thomas Cranmer. Think of Louis the

14th and the French Huguenots. These Calvinist Protestants faced forced conversions, imprisonment, galley slavery, exile, and even death. While the absolute monarchy and Roman Catholic establishment held power and appeared triumphant. Think of the leaders of the Bolshevik revolution, Lenin and Trotsky and later the regime of Joseph Stalin with the Soviet Communist Party and the millions of Orthodox priests, Baptist pastors and ordinary believers who filled the gulags who were shot or who were starved in the Holodomor and beyond. Think of Mao's communist China and the Chinese house church Christians and pastors who were imprisoned, tortured, or sent to labor camps while the party and the chairman Mao held absolute power.

Many times it seems as though the wicked are doing really well and at the same time the righteous are suffering. These are large-scale examples that I put before you. Yet there are many more common everyday ordinary examples that you have probably experienced yourself. A person who is not godly, not devoted to Jesus, does not depend on Christ for salvation, does not follow God's law, does not live to the glory of God, yet they prosper in wealth or in health or in a good name or in skills or with their family. Yet the righteous are left there suffering.

What should the righteous do when they are suffering yet the wicked are prospering? What should the righteous, those in Christ do when the wicked in the world are prospering and we are suffering? Answer: Psalm 37. That is what you should do. That is what I should do. Boys and girls, if you have not learned this yet, you will learn it eventually, that many times you will look out at those who do not love Jesus, who do not want to live for the glory of God, who do not want to trust in Christ for salvation, and they will seem to be doing extremely well. They are growing their wealth, their families are growing, they are growing in skills, their reputation or their good name is growing. And Christians are often left looking at the unrighteous, the wicked like, I am suffering and they are prospering. They have rejected Christ and things are going really well. I have accepted Christ by God's grace and things are going really badly for me. What should you and I do when we are in that kind of situation? That is the kind of situation that David is in Psalm 37 when he writes this.

This psalm is a psalm of instruction. Look at the very beginning of it in your own Bible. All we have got is of David. Of David. David wrote this psalm and it is an acrostic poem which you will even see if you have a footnote in your Bible. It is an acrostic poem or song. Each stanza beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Like David has written other psalms in the same way. We do not know the exact occasion of his writing, but we do learn from Psalm 37 what you and I as Christians should do when we are suffering and the wicked are prospering. That is what especially verses 1-8 that we are looking at today deal with. Now, by the way, we learn something else in Psalm 37 concerning songs that we can and should sing as Christians to the glory of God and songs that even praise him and glorify him, though in an indirect way. Now, hear me. Psalm 37 does not offer up any prayers. It does not explicitly ascribe any praise to God at all. It is

40 verses long and the whole psalm is simply like a sermon. It is just a bunch of directions given to believers. And lest we think that every one of our songs that we sing in public worship or in family or in private worship has to be, you know, solely focused on the person, God, what he has done in salvation. And we should never focus on like directions for Christians. So Psalm 37 is there to rebuke us if we think it has got to be just who God is, what he has done, that kind of stuff. Because at the end of the day, God wrote Psalm 37. And he wrote it through David. He inspired it. David wrote it down. But this is God's song. And it is a song to be sung by Christians. And though it is kind of indirect, it is a song to be sung to the glory of God and praising God, though it is not directly praising him. So we should see even just kind of as a by the way as we look at this psalm that God is glorified as we sing songs that are just exhorting one another to do good works especially in certain circumstances. So Psalm 37, this is Matthew Henry says this psalm is a sermon and an excellent useful sermon. It is calculated not for our devotion but for our daily living. It is not for our devotion like offering up praise explicitly but more indirectly it is praising the Lord but it is just for our daily conversation meaning our daily living. Henry points out there is nothing in it of prayer or praise, but it is all instruction. So, we need to learn from Psalm 37, the instruction that God has for us here. But we also just need to learn that sometimes it is really good to sing songs and it is to the glory of God, offering it up as a sacrifice of praise to God. But the content of the psalm is exhorting others, ourselves and others to walk in faithfulness. So again, when the wicked prosper, the righteous, what do we do?

And the doctrine that we should learn at least from these first eight verses of Psalm 37 is this: ***When the wicked prosper, the righteous must trust in the Lord and do good.*** The righteous must trust in the Lord and do good. Boys and girls, when we look out and those who do not love Jesus are doing really well, what do we do? How do we respond to it? Well, David is going to tell us many ways that we should not respond to that. But how we should respond is trusting in the Lord and his providence. He is in control and ourselves doing the good works that he has laid before us to do for his glory. That is how we should respond.

So, I have got for you 12 practical directions that I will point out to you from these first eight verses concerning what you as a Christian should do when you are suffering and the wicked are prospering. You may not always be in this kind of situation to where you are looking out at the wicked and prospering and you are personally suffering. You will be there at some point if you are not there right now. But even if you are not there right now, you are going to be there someday. So you need this. And there are other Christians, your fellow brothers and sisters, who are probably there right now. And they need you to know this so that you can encourage them and exhort them with what God says to do in such situations. So 12 practical directions concerning what you as a Christian should do when you are suffering and the wicked are prospering. Now, just so you know at the outset, I am giving you 12 directions. I am just going to point them out to you from Psalm 37. Three of those 12 directions are the exact same thing. David repeats himself three

times. There are little bitty nuances in those three times, but three times he is going to say essentially the same thing that he says at the beginning of verse one.

Look at it in your own Bible. Fret not yourself because of evildoers. Fret not yourself because of evildoers. So what is the first direction? ***When the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer***, what is the direction for us? ***Do not freak out and worry***. That is going to be repeated two more times. Do not freak out and worry. Fret not yourselves because of evildoers. Boys and girls, when you look out and the wicked are doing really well and everything is going well for them and you as a Christian, maybe you are suffering, things are going badly for you or other Christians, things are going badly for them. The first thing God says, what do I do in that situation? God says, "Do not freak out and do not worry. Fret not yourselves because of evildoers."

And I think our experience shows us why this is the first direction in Psalm 37. Because examine yourself. Examine your own life. Examine your thoughts, your affections, your will. Examine your heart. Examine your actions and see what are you most tempted to do when you are suffering even though you are laboring though imperfectly, but laboring to do what God says and trust his promises and live for his glory. And then you see the wicked do not give a rip about any of that. And they are doing really well. What is the first thing you are tempted to do? Freak out and worry. Why is this happening? Why are they doing this? Things are not going to go well for me. It is the evildoers are going to triumph over us. David's first direction, God's first direction to us. When the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, first of all, stop freaking out and stop worrying.

But secondly, look at the next part of verse one. He says, "Be not envious of wrongdoers." So ***when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, do not envy wrongdoers***. There is another temptation that he is trying to protect us from. When things are going really well for other people, it is very easy to envy them, to be jealous of them, to covet even what they have got. Well, they are not obeying the Lord and things are going really well for them. And you begin to envy even wrongdoers because of the supposed fruit that they are getting even in spite of their wrongdoing. And David is saying, God is saying, do not be jealous of wrongdoers. Do not envy them.

The psalmist deals with this also in Psalm 73:17. It is when he looks at the wicked prospering and they are going really well and he is tempted to envy them. He says, "Then I went into the sanctuary of God. Then I discovered their end." Meaning, I came to my senses even though I was tempted to be jealous of wrongdoers. And I remembered when I came face to face with the truth of who God is, what he has done, what he requires of us. And I remembered what the end is for them. And I do not want to envy them. Their end is judgment. Their end is destruction. Their end is shame. And David is saying, "Do not dare be envious of wrongdoers."

Then the third direction is in verse two, and it is connected to verse one. Of course, do not freak out. Do not envy them. Why should we not envy them? Verse two, for they the wicked, evildoers, wrongdoers, for they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. So ***when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer***, the third direction is ***remember that the wicked will fade and wither***. They may be on top right now. It is not going to last. They may be prospering now, but this is the only prosperity they are ever going to experience. This life is as good as it gets for an unbeliever. And this life is as bad as it gets for a Christian. He is saying just remember that they are soon going to fade and wither. Do not be jealous of the grass that will fade tomorrow or of a green herb that will wither in two days time. Remember, the wicked will fade and wither. And that is an antidote concerning being envious of them or even in freaking out or worrying about their prosperity in light of your suffering.

John Trapp said, "This proud grass shall be mowed down ere long, if not sooner, yet at death howsoever, which unto them is but a trap door to hell." The wicked's present prosperity is but like Haman's banquet before execution. Do you remember the story of Haman in the book of Esther? Boys and girls, have you read the book of Esther or have it? Have you had that read to you? There is a wicked man named Haman who wants to destroy all of God's people and he has this plot but his plot is discovered and they throw a great banquet for him the night before and he thinks he is being praised and lauded and then right after the banquet do you remember what happens to him? He is killed on the same gallows that he had built to kill righteous Mordecai. That is what the wicked are like in this life. Celebrating at a feast but not knowing that the next day their life will be required of them. And if they do not have Christ as their savior, it will be like Haman going from his feast right before his execution. Remember, the wicked will fade and wither.

Examine yourself again. Are you envious of the wicked? Are you envious of the prosperity of the wicked? God may be saving the best for you for later, but in his kindness, he is giving the wicked even good right now, but that is as good as they are ever going to get it. They will fade and wither. So remember that. Especially when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, the wicked will fade and wither. But not so with you Christians. You will be a pillar in the temple of your God. You will not fade and wither. You who have Christ's righteousness and his forgiveness, you will not fade and wither like the wicked. You will not be like the grass or the green herb. You will be like a pillar in the temple of your God. His face will shine upon you. You will receive a new glorified body, a new mind, free from sin, perfectly beholding the face of Jesus Christ. And there you will run and not grow weary. Do not envy the wicked. Their days are numbered.

Fourthly, look at the first part of verse three. Here is the fourth direction that we can glean from Psalm 37. ***When the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, trust in the Lord's providence and devote yourself to good works***. Here is the

first positive. I mean, the negatives need to be there. Do not freak out and worry. Do not be envious of them. They are going to fade and wither. But now, here is the positive direction, not just the negative. Do not do this. Here is the positive. Trust in the Lord, which means he is in control. He is sovereign over all. Trust in him even though you do not understand what he is doing exactly. Trust in the Lord and do good. That is your job. Do good. Do what the Lord requires of you. Do the good works that God has created you in Christ Jesus beforehand that you should walk in them. That is what you should be focused on. When you are focused on freaking out and worrying or envying evildoers without discerning their end, you are not going to have the focus that you should have in trusting the Lord's providence and doing good, doing the good works that he has created you for. And so God says through David, how simple is this? Trust the Lord's providence and devote yourself to good works.

How many times have you in your life because of suffering get distracted from the good works in your vocation that the Lord has laid out for you to do whether it is inside the home or outside the home? How many times have you been suffering and maybe even it is exacerbated the situation by the fact that the wicked are prospering and that distracts you from doing good works like loving your neighbor as yourself and meeting needs? How many times has your suffering and the prospering of the wicked maybe even kept you from devoting yourself to the good of private worship or family worship or public worship? David gives us the do nots, but then the dos are trust in the Lord and do good.

The Christian life is not easy, but when it boils down to it, it is rather simple. God has given us great promises to rest in. God has shown us great evidence of his kind providence both in our lives and throughout the scripture and throughout church history. And he has given us his law and it is not a burden for believers to try to live up to attain a righteousness. His commandments are not burdensome for Christians. His commandments are life. Like David says, "Your commandments are life." You show me how to live. You show me how to love my wife. You show me how to love my husband. You show me how to love my kids. You show me how to love my neighbors. You show me what to do when the wicked are prospering and the righteous are suffering.

The Lord has given us his word. He has given us his law. He has given us his gospel. He has given us the examples of his kind providence so that we can say, "I am going to trust the Lord and be laser focused on doing the good works that God has laid out beforehand that I should walk in them.

Fifthly, look at the second part of verse three in Psalm 37. Dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Or your translation could say something like feed on faithfulness. Befriend faithfulness, feed on faithfulness. Either way, it is the same point. Dwell in the land. This is in the context of the old covenant. This is the land that the Lord has given you. Be content with what the Lord has assigned to you, it is yours. He has given it to you and labor to be faithful. Whatever the Lord has given you, wherever he has placed you, whatever duties he has put upon you, he

will give you strength to fulfill them. And your job is to be best friends with faithfulness. So that at the end you and I would hear from Christ, well done, good and faithful servant. Simple directions. Dwell in the land. Be content with what the Lord has given. ***Do your duties and befriend faithfulness.***

I cannot tell you how many people I have counseled, both individuals, couples, groups, how many people I have counseled that their lives are chaotic and most of it boils down to they are not doing their simple duties that the Lord has given them to do in their station. They are not being faithful with the simple everyday, not they are not like these fabulous duties that shine and everyone sees what you are doing, but just the ordinary everyday things that pertain to being faithful. He is saying, "Be content, dwell in the land, and be best friends with faithfulness." So that every day you want to go to bed thinking, "I labored to be faithful in the duties in the station that God has placed me." And I will trust the Lord with the results, but my job is to befriend faithfulness. Do your duties and befriend faithfulness when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. Psalm 37 might not be exactly what you thought or what you would even like it to be when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. Yeah, tell us what to do. He is like, "Yeah, trust the Lord and do good works. Be content with where you are at and befriend faithfulness." Be faithful and do good works. So those are the first two like proactive do this directions of Psalm 37.

But now look at the sixth direction and this is in verse 4. ***When the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, delight yourself in the Lord.*** Delight yourself in the Lord. He says, "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart." Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. This is a great direction especially in times of suffering and especially when the wicked are prospering, the righteous are suffering, because I think the whole point of what David is saying is "you are tempted to look out at the prosperity of the wicked and you want those things that they have got and those things are the desires of your heart. But when you are suffering, you do not have those things. So the desires of your heart are not fulfilled. What do you do?" David is saying, "Delight yourself in the Lord." Because you have always got the Lord. And if your chief delight is in the Lord, even when you are suffering or the unrighteous are prospering, you still get the desires of your heart. Because if the desire of your heart is the Lord Jesus Christ and that is who you are seeking after and drawing all your ultimate joy from, it is like Jesus is always there for that. But if the desires of your heart are outward and physical prosperity, that is not always going to be there and you are going to be envying those who have it. No, no, no, no. If you delight yourself in the Lord, he will give you the desires of your heart because the desires of your heart are the Lord and his glory.

This verse is often misused in our day, especially with prosperity theology, word of faith theology, and it gets turned into something like an exchange like if you will be good enough, whatever you want, the Lord is going to give you. And so I am not joking. I have literally talked with a woman who said, "Well, Psalm 37:4 says that if

I am being faithful to the Lord, he is going to give me that new truck that I really desire because that is the desire of my heart." I mean, that stuff that goes around like crazy and sounds great, does it not? From a fleshly, from a carnal point of view. Sounds great to anyone, not just a Christian. Sounds good to unbelievers. Sounds if I do this, my divine slot machine or genie is going to give me this thing that I really want. That is not what David is saying in Psalm 37:4. Delight yourself in the Lord. And if he is your chief delight, he is going to give you more of himself. He is going to give you the desires of your heart, which are him, and to glorify him. And even when you are suffering, if the desire of your heart is Christ and glorifying Christ, then you can always have that even when you are suffering greatly. You can especially glorify Christ when you are suffering greatly as you say, "The Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." And the world does not know what to do with that. When Christians are still happy when we are in the valley of the shadow of death, they are saying, "Yeah, I am in the valley of the shadow of death, but Christ is with me. His rod and his staff, they comfort me. He prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies. I am good." God is especially glorified even in suffering as we delight ourselves in the Lord.

John Trapp again said, "While others delight in riches and pleasures, as if there were no other happiness, but to have and to hold these physical things, no sport, unless men may have the devil as their playfellow." The like counsel here unto Paul gives to his son Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:12, while others laid hold as with tooth and nail on riches, etc., You lay hold on eternal life and make God your portion and you will be good forever. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Unbelievers, this is what you need. You probably do not need what you think you need. You need a new mind, a new heart that wants to chiefly and mainly delight in the Lord who created you, who has sustained you, who you have violently sinned against and offended, from whom you deserve death and judgment, but who sent his only son as a human being to the earth to live for righteousness for sinners like you, who died in place of sinners like you and me and who arose from the dead conquering sin and death and offers eternal life to everyone who comes to him through faith. That is what you need. You need to delight yourself in the Lord. Trust in Christ alone for salvation. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart because your desires will be for the Lord. Unbelievers, this is what you desperately need. Are you currently outside of Christ? Well, then go back. Go back in the psalm and just look at verse two again. The wicked, the wrongdoers, the evil, they will soon fade like grass. That is you. You are going to die. You are going to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and give an account. And if he is not your savior, things are going to go very badly for you. But Christ's arms are open. He says, "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Christ says, "Come and believe on me alone for salvation, and I will forgive you, count you righteous, and bring you into the family of God and teach you how to make your delight in me, and I will give you the desires of your heart." Unbelievers, turn to Christ and live.

Now, *Christians*, delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Look to Christ alone for your ultimate satisfaction and joy. And he will give you satisfaction and joy. You are not going to get satisfaction and joy unless you are looking to the source of it, which is Christ Jesus. So when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, do not envy them, but delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Now seventh, look at the seventh direction that we get. This is in verse five of Psalm 37. He says, "Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in him and he will act. Commit your way to the Lord." Here is how I will paraphrase it for your practical application. Commit your way to the Lord. ***Make sure you can say "I am doing this for the glory of God" to everything that you do.***

Can you say that with a clear conscience? Everything that you are about, everything that you are devoted to, everything that you spend time on, that in some way you are saying, "I am doing this for the glory of God. Maybe it is taking a nap on Sunday afternoons. Does your body need rest on this day that the Lord has set aside, one in seven, for us to worship and get deep physical rest on? Then take a nap for the glory of God. Whatever it may be, it can be the simplest thing. It can be the biggest thing. But can you say I am doing this for God's glory to everything you do? That is what it means to commit your way to the Lord. This will help me glorify and enjoy God. That is why I am doing this. Then he says, "Trust in him and he will act." So it is make sure you can say, "I am doing this for God's glory to everything you do."

Then the second half is just trust in the Lord. Depend on him and he is the one that is going to act. Your job is to by the power of the Holy Spirit, trusting in Christ alone for your salvation, say whether I eat or drink or whatever I do, I am laboring to do all to the glory of God. And then just trust the Lord. Your job is to be faithful. It is the Lord's job to act in these ways. Trust in him and he will act.

Again, John Trapp said what he means is depend wholly upon the Lord for direction and success in all your undertakings and affairs, easing your mind to him by prayer, and casting yourself by faith upon his care and conduct. Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in him and he will act. How simple is this psalm so far? Are any of these things hard to understand? I do not think so. Trust in the Lord and do good. Be best friends with faithfulness. Commit your way to the Lord and trust in his providence and he is the one who is going to act. The Christian life is not as complicated as people make it. It is trust and obey. Trust in the Lord and do what he has told you to do in his written word. Not in what I think God said to me in my private prayer. God wants me to do this or what I am feeling. No, it is written. Go to the teaching and the testimony. What does God tell me that I should do? Labor to do that by his power and trust in him and he will act.

Now look at the eighth direction, and it is in verse 6. Psalm 37:6. "He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your justice as the noonday." He, that is the Lord, will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your justice as the

noonday. By "your righteousness" here he is not speaking of the imputed (or) accounted righteousness of Christ. He is speaking of your actual functional righteousness that you live out, though imperfectly, but empowered by God the Holy Spirit when you do what is right. You have a righteousness. Christians, you do not have a perfect righteousness by which you can offer yourselves to God and be accepted. But by God's grace, you do have a practical righteousness when you obey the Lord by his power. And that is what he is talking about.

You Christians who are doing laboring to do what is right and confessing your sins when you fail your righteousness though it is obscure right now the wicked are prospering you are suffering it seems like like Job's friends like you are suffering because of some unrighteousness but when in fact Job was not suffering because of any of his unrighteousness. Job's righteousness that he actually had was just veiled by his suffering. And everyone looks upon like that guy must not be obeying the Lord very well because look how terribly his life is going. David is saying that righteousness that is obscured by your suffering, it eventually will come to light. The Lord will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your justice as the noonday. Meaning all of the good works that you have done for God's glory by his grace through the power of his spirit though many of them are obscure now and no one else sees them and that is okay one day they will be broadcast for everyone to see and you faithful Christian will be vindicated not only in the eyes of God but in the eyes of men. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your justice as the noonday. So when you are laboring to be faithful, though it seems like those around you do not see it, the wicked definitely do not see it or the wicked even try to say you are being unfaithful or unrighteous, whatever it may be. You do not have to freak out and defend yourself and try to show how you are all righteous and how you actually did what was right. Sometimes you can just say, "A day is coming when the Lord will bring forth my righteousness as the light and my justice as the noonday, and I am content with that."

Remember, here is the direction. ***Remember the Lord will vindicate the righteous in the end.*** Those who are being faithful, who are committing their way to the Lord, who are laboring to do good, who are doing the directions of Psalm 37, though the world may not see it now, they will see it one day. As Trapp says, John Trapp is great Puritan commentator and many people have repeated it since then. Somebody probably said it before him as well. He said, "On that last day, there will be a resurrection, not only of bodies, but of names." Your bodies will not only be resurrected and glorified, but your reputation and your name that was obscured through the wicked trying to blaspheme against God by shaming you or slandering you. All of that will be wiped away and your righteousness empowered by God's grace will shine. You will be vindicated. So sometimes you can just say, "I am all right with not being vindicated in this life." It is not a bad thing to defend the truth. And if someone is slandering you, it is not a bad thing to say, "Uh, that is not right. That is wrong. That is a lie. That is not a bad thing." But sometimes it is just an impossible situation and you just got to go to Psalm 37:6. He will bring forth your

righteousness as the light and your justice as the noonday.

Trapp said, "God will so oil your good name that infamy shall not stick to it. Dirt will stick upon a mud wall, not so upon marble. No dirt will stick to you." Remember the Lord will vindicate the righteous. Especially remember that when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer.

Now look ninthly the ninth direction that we can glean from Psalm 37 1-8. It is in the first part of verse 7. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him. Sometimes that might be easy for you and I to do, but in this situation where in David writes this psalm, that is not so easy. The wicked seem like they are winning and the righteous are losing. They are being celebrated and praised and I am being scorned and ridiculed. Wait. Just sit there. The point of the beginning of verse seven is ***do not force things through pragmatism, but trust the Lord's providence***. Do not force things through pragmatism, but trust the Lord's providence. Especially when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him. Remembering what verse six said, what David said right before this. The Lord will vindicate the righteous, but you got to be patient. It is not going to be as quickly as you and I would like it. So, be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him. Trust in his wise and kind providence. He will vindicate you, but in his own time and in his own way. So be still and wait patiently for him.

Now 10th that we should glean from Psalm 37 1-8 is found in the second part of verse 7. Here is that "fret not" again. "Fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices." A little bit of nuance, but basically the same thing that he said in verse one. It seems as though David is writing this psalm, and of course, he is under the inspiration of God, the Holy Spirit. And he gives us all of these helpful directions to both sing and memorize and obey. And then he gets to this what we have marked the second half of verse 7. And it is as though, David goes, "You know what? You need to hear the first part again. Do not freak out and worry. So he says it again. ***Do not freak out or worry***. Fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way. He is prospering not in the Lord's way. He is prospering in his way. Do not freak out about that. Do not worry about that. Remember again verse two. He will wither and fade over the man who carries out evil devices. So again, we are told, "Do not freak out or worry when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer."

You especially need to hear this, and we need to repeatedly hear this, but especially when you are entering into an election cycle. Let me guess what you are going to hear. I will tell you what you are going to hear. This is the most important election in the history of the United States of America. You who are older, have you heard that? Have you heard that? Pretty much every election, especially presidential election in the midterms, you are going to hear the same thing. They want you to freak out and worry. Depending on your political persuasion. It is like, well, the other people are the wicked and we are the righteous. And that is

definitely true in some cases, but it is like they are going to prosper and we are going to die. So, freak out and worry. And David here, no, no, no. Fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his own way, over the man who carries out evil devices. The answer to chaos or when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer is not freaking out. It is not worrying, but it is doing your duties, doing good, befriending faithfulness, and trusting the Lord in his providence. So there it is again. Do not freak out and worry. Do not worry. We have it again. He is going to say it again in the 12th direction. So that is the 10th direction.

And now we have the 11th direction that we can glean from this these first eight verses and it is at the beginning of verse 8. "Refrain from anger and forsake wrath." Refrain from anger and forsake wrath. Now, here again is why you need to learn how to study the Bible and you need to look at me. Look at my eyes. This is why you need to be taught the Bible, not just read it on your own. One of the biggest myths and one of the biggest actual hindrances to many Christians growth in grace is that they have bought this lie that what I really need is just to read the Bible on my own. It is like, nope. What you really need is to be taught the Bible by those who know it better than you and can help you understand it. That is what you need more than anything. That is what our spiritual forefathers, the Puritans, understood. They would even preachers and pastors, they would frequently go and listen to other sermons, even though they know how to study the Bible. They know how to divide the word of truth. They know how to make sure and watch out for errors, but they would frequently go and listen to other sermons because they are getting taught the word of God by someone who has been studying it, writing it, thinking through it, praying through it, applying it for 10, 20, 30 hours and they can help you understand it in like one hour. You can understand 20 or 30 hours worth of study and application and get it in one hour. And so they would even meet. They would meet at 6:00 a.m. and a different preacher would preach every day. They would meet at 6:00 a.m. And these pastors would go and listen to it as well. And common, you know, non-pastors, just normal Christians, members of churches would go and listen to it as well because they understood I could spend an hour alone in a quiet time like reading the Bible for myself or I could spend an hour listening to a sermon and I am going to get 20 times more out of listening to the sermon than just reading the Bible on my own for an hour. You need to read the Bible on your own, but you especially need to be taught the scriptures so that you can learn and grow and someone can apply it to you. And so you get to verses like this and you do not go it is always wrong to be angry. But if that is what you are refrain from anger, well, David says refrain from anger.

The psalm that we were just in before this, he says, "Be angry." It is a command to be angry. So, what do you do with that? You have to learn how to study the Bible. And the more you are taught the Bible, the more you are going to learn how to study the Bible on your own as well. And therefore, you will understand that what David is saying is to refrain from being sinfully angry. Refrain from the word that he says right after is wrath. That is sinful, unrighteous anger. So, he is not

saying it is a bad thing to ever get angry. No, no, no. He is saying refrain from being sinfully angry and having the wrath of man come out of you. The wrath of man is not like the wrath of God. You and I do not have righteous wrath. That word is used in a righteous way of God because God does have righteous and perfect wrath against sin. But wrath when it is used of a man is wicked. We are not able to have righteous wrath. We are able though to have righteous anger and we should have righteous anger. Refrain. What he is saying is, "**Watch out for sinful anger and unrighteous wrath. Refrain from and forsake them both.**" John Trapp again said, "Angry a man may be and must be at evildoers." Angry a man may be and must be at evildoers. And as much as they break God's law, pollute his name, procure the judgments of God upon others, also pull down swift destruction upon themselves. Thus Moses was angry in Exodus 32:19. And our Savior Jesus was angry in Mark 3:5. Yet not so angry that they could at the same time pity those who were displeased who they were displeased with and pray for them too. Trapp is pointing out he is not saying refrain from all anger. He is saying refrain from sinful anger and the wrath of man. And Trapp concludes his commentary on this verse. Says this they that cannot do are inordinately and sinfully angry and must at any rate suppress such passionate distempers. He is saying if you cannot also pray for those who you are angry at then that is a passionate distemper. That is an inordinate anger, sinfully angry. He is saying not refrain from any kind of anger. You should be angry at sin, at evildoers, but he is saying watch out for sinful anger and unrighteous wrath. Refrain from and forsake them both. So just getting really angry when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. That is not the answer. It should make you angry but not sinfully angry and not wrathful. It should make you angry and you can still pray for your enemies. It should make you angry at them and you can still pity them because though they are doing the evil at the end of the day you can say but for the grace of God that could be me. If God did not restrain me and save me if God did not sanctify me then I could be right there. So there is still an element of pity and absolutely of prayer. If you are not able to do that, then that is sinful anger and unrighteous wrath. Watch out, he says.

Now, lastly, in verse eight, we have it again. "Fret not yourself." It is the third time he has given us that direction in eight verses. "Fret not yourself," he says "it tends only to evil." Freaking out and worrying when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. It is like that is just going to lead to evil in you. So, here we have it again. **Do not freak out or worry.** And this is how I will phrase it. Christians, hear me: we do not get to throw pity parties. We do not get to throw pity parties even when we are suffering greatly, even when the wicked are prospering. Pity parties tend only to evil. Do not freak out. Do not worry. Christ has won. Christ is winning. Christ will win and we will win with him. Why would we freak out and worry? Act like it, Christians. Christ has won. Christ is winning. Christ will win. And we win with him. Let us act like it.

Do not freak out or worry. Watch out for sinful anger and unrighteous wrath.

Forsake them both. Do not force things through pragmatism, but trust the Lord's providence. Remember, the Lord will vindicate the righteous. Make sure you can say, "I am doing this for God's glory." To everything you do, trust the Lord, and he will act. Delight yourself in the Lord. Do your duties and befriend faithfulness. Trust in the Lord's providence and devote yourself to good works. Remember, the wicked will fade and wither. Do not envy wrongdoers. Do not freak out or worry. Jesus has got this. Jesus has got us. So, let us march forward in faith.

Pray with me. Our Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for Psalm 37. Help us to understand it. Help us to be convicted of sin that we need to be convicted of. We ask you to grant us repentance where we need it. Increase our faith. Help us to delight ourselves in you. Teach us what it looks like to delight ourselves in you. And we ask you as you promise to give us the desires of our heart as we desire you above all. Save those who are not yet in Christ. Sanctify those who are. For those who are sick, we ask your compassion, your healing to be upon them. For those who are suffering, we ask that you encourage them through Psalm 37. We ask you to help them delight themselves in you. That you would give them the desires of their heart. Comfort them in their suffering. Those who are straying from you and living in unrepentant sin, we ask that you correct them and grant them repentance. Those who are striving forward in faith, we ask that you strengthen them, you preserve them, keep them from the evil one, and help us all to finish this race well. We ask you to continue to purify your church at large and this local church. Make us a people who love you and love one another fiercely. Help us to obey Psalm 37 for your glory. In Christ's name, amen.