

Intro:

In the book of 2 Timothy, written at the end of Paul's life. Paul warned young Timothy of the fact that evil would increase during the last days.

Slide 2

2 Timothy 3:1–4 (NLT) — **1** You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. **2** For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. **3** They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. **4** They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God.

Is that not a description of today? People are self-absorbed, without shame of doing evil things, and without any fear of God. Paul said there would be difficult times ahead. What often makes those times even more difficult is that many who fit Paul's description, are those who make the rules and have the control. Who sit in every position of authority and power in our society.

When we look around at what is happening or even watch the evening news, it is tempting to feel as though evil is winning.

Children are being killed in the womb at an alarming rate, children are being physically mutilated and altered because someone in authority is determined it's ok and even necessary to alter their gender. The issue of sex trafficking is devastating so many lives, drug addiction is wreaking havoc on our society. And yet laws are being passed that legalize and encourage this wickedness – instead of forbidding it. All for the sake of the almighty \$.

What is obviously corrupt and evil is being promoted as something lovely and good, while truth is being forbidden to be spoken or shared in any form. In fact it feels as if hearing or finding truth today has become a difficult if not impossible task, as the whole world seems to be busy forming their own narrative. A narrative that is far from reality or truth.

Maybe you are here this morning and you find this all too overwhelming and discouraging. To the point that your attention has become more fixed **on how bad things are getting than on the fact that Jesus still reigns**. I know that often I myself have been guilty of focusing more on what evil is doing than on what Jesus has done, and will do.

If all that is happening today has left you in a position that you **find yourself fretting more than trusting** God's promises. Then I am glad you are here this morning or listening online, so that I can share some promises and instructions from God's Word concerning how we are to live in these last days without losing perspective of all that God promises the believer.

Please stand with me this morning as we read the first 7 verses of Psalm 37 together.

Psalm 37:1–7 (NKJV) — 1 Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. **2** For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb. **3** Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. **4** Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. **5** Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass. **6** He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday. **7** Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

Prayer

This Psalm was written by King David during the later years of his life. As he likely was reflected on not only the evil he experienced but God's faithfulness.

Slide 3

1 Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.

The NLT states verse one as **“don't worry about the wicked or envy those who do wrong”**. But the Hebrew word interpreted worry in the NLT doesn't exclusively mean to worry, but it also means to become hot, agitated, or even angry. It is the idea of being overcome, either - mentally, emotionally, or even spiritually – by the circumstances happening in the world around you because of evil men and women.

Do you ever watch the news or any form of media for that matter and just find yourself either ready to crawl in a hole and hide. Or even worst, you find yourself feeling the need to take matters into your own hands. In other words – you start to feel like it is time to lock and load.

When I hear of these evil and ludicrous laws that are being put in place, it just makes my blood boil. When I watch the news I begin to feel **as though good has already lost to evil**. If you are not careful, you can be sucked into the belief that humanity is beyond hope.

But that is exactly what David was encouraging us not to do. Don't fret because of evil doers. Don't allow yourself to become enraged nor defeated by the evil that is no doubt, increasing in this world.

I am not saying that you just stick your head in the sand or that you don't take a stand against the evil. But there is a **huge difference between fretting over evil and faithfully, diligently, and prayerfully standing against it**.

Instead of feeling as though we need to hide from it all, or even take matters into our own hands. We need to first recognize **Who's battle it really is!** Then with that perspective, take action.

By action, I don't mean storming the capital nor slander our leaders. But by action, I mean using the freedoms God has given us to vote and to communicate our positions. Encourage your leaders to stand for righteousness. But most of all to pray for those in leadership.

I think we are often guilty of believing that those in leadership are beyond being convicted by the Lord.

Slide 4

Proverbs 21:1 (NKJV) — 1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.

But most of all – **keep your focus on why you are here.**

I am reminded of Jesus's example of how He lived His life while here on earth. He came with His mission from the Father. He didn't let the evil plans of the enemy divert His attention. He was neither ignorant of the enemy's schemes **nor was He consumed by them.** He didn't join any insurrections to stand against the evil control of Rome. But instead He stayed focused on the mission that the Father had given Him to carry out. To preach the truth about the Kingdom of heaven, and to love on those the Father had given Him. **Instead of trying to overthrow Rome, He offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin on the Cross.**

That would be my encouragement to you this morning. Stay focused on your mission. We are here to go into all the world and make disciples. Its not that we are to ignore the things happening around us. But we are not to allow those things **to ultimately rob us of the focus of our mission.**

Not only are we not to Fret over all that is happening,

David goes on to say in the second half of verse 1. **“nor be envious of the workers of iniquity”.**

We can become deceived when we see the lives of those given over to wicked ways. Their greedy and lavish lifestyles can make it seem as if they are being rewarded instead of punished. Looking from the outside in, it might appear that they have much to be desired, even to the point of tempting us to covet what they seem to have. But understand even what they have that seems desirable is like smoke. It is so fleeting. **But it is also so costly.**

Slide 5

Matthew 16:26 (NKJV) — 26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Not only are they living a lie in this lifetime, but they will pay eternally for that lie. Long after the temporary pleasures have turned into torment.

Slide 6

2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb.

The psalmist wrote in Ps 73 of the danger of falling into the deception of coveting what is gained by evil.

Slide 7

Psalm 73:2–9 (NLT) — **2** But as for me, I almost lost my footing. My feet were slipping, and I was almost gone. **3** For I envied the proud when I saw them prosper despite their wickedness. **4** They seem to live such painless lives; their bodies are so healthy and strong. **5** They don't have troubles like other people; they're not plagued with problems like everyone else. **6** They wear pride like a jeweled necklace and clothe themselves with cruelty. **7** These fat cats have everything their hearts could ever wish for! **8** They scoff and speak only evil; in their pride they seek to crush others. **9** They boast against the very heavens, and their words strut throughout the earth.

But when we see the prosperity of the wicked, we can fail to see the whole picture.

Slide 8

Psalm 73:16–19 (NLT) — **16** So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper. But what a difficult task it is! **17** Then I went into your sanctuary, O God, and I finally understood the destiny of the wicked. **18** Truly, you put them on a slippery path and send them sliding over the cliff to destruction. **19** In an instant they are destroyed, completely swept away by terrors.

No matter how powerful, rich, or controlling the wicked man seems to be today. His days are numbered. Think of the evil men throughout time, who came to an end - King Herod, Ceazar, Nero, Hitler, or even Stalin. Consider those in recent days who used their wealth and power to carry out their own perversions and encourage others to do the same. For every evil man, there is a day appointed when all their evil efforts will cease and they will give an account of their lives before the judgement seat of God. What a steep price they will pay for such a brief season of decadence. Their fleeting life spent fulfilling their lusts and fleshly desires will cost them an eternity of torment.

Know that their lives are as fragile as a blade of grass in the heat of summer. So don't covet their luxuries or decadent lifestyles. **But instead remember their destiny.**

- **So how do we stop fretting or stop envying those who have received their gains from evil ways?**

Well I want to share **4 points from this Psalm** that will help us to take our eyes off of the wicked and keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

1. The first point is to Trust in the Lord.

Slide 9

3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.

The Hebrew word interpreted as trust – **means to have confidence or assurance in.**

Here is the truth of the matter. Fretting is the opposite of trusting. Getting all caught up and filled with anxiety or even anger by the schemes of the wicked is not putting my hope and trust in Jesus. When we are caught up in worry or anger, we are really taking the position that God is no longer on the throne. Acting as if God Himself is somehow overpowered or caught off guard.

But instead, we are to simply have faith that the God who spoke creation into existence, still has the sovereign power to carry out His will, in spite of the plans of wicked men and women. In spite of all the schemes of Satan!

Even when we seem to be up against the wall, with no way out. We have to look beyond the circumstances and see into God's eternal realm, in order to see the real picture. The fact that God is absolutely in control.

Consider an event recorded in 2 Kings when the prophet Elisha and his servant found themselves surrounded by a vast army sent by the King of Syria. After the king found that it was Elisha who was alerting the King of Israel of Syria's plots against them.

It came to the point that the King of Syria was convinced that he had a traitor among his ranks. So he demanded for his servants to find who the traitor was. But the servant assured the king that he had no traitor.

Slide 10

2 Kings 6:12 (NKJV) — 12 And one of his servants said, "None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom."

But instead of understanding that it was God Himself who was working against Him. The King of Syria decided he would just try to eliminate Elisha. Isn't it crazy how men and women bent on evil are **so blind** and **even oblivious** to the fact that they are ultimately attempting to stand against God? They are clueless to their helplessness and their destiny.

Concerning this situation for Elisha. After learning that Elisha was in Dothan. The king sent an army to surround the city and capture Elisha. But God!

Slide 11

2 Kings 6:15–17 (NKJV) — 15 And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "**Alas, my master! What shall we do?**" **16** So he answered, "**Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.**" **17** And Elisha prayed, and said, "**LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.**" Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, **the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.**

Isn't that an amazing picture? Here in the physical realm, it looked as if there was no hope for Elisha and his helper, against the strength of the Syrian Army. But the reality was that **it was the Syrian Army who had no hope.**

Can you imagine the horses and chariots of fire that are surrounding Sante Fe and Washington DC right now? **Oh, evil thinks it is winning.** But if they only knew the truth.

We are given a picture from Revelation of what it will be like when Jesus returns to bring judgment against the nations.

Slide 12

Revelation 19:15 (NLT) — 15 From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will release the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty, like juice flowing from a winepress.

Listen. God is in absolute control. We see evil days ahead, and no doubt they are evil. But God controls the final outcome by his power, grace, and mercy. **And the day is coming when He will overcome all evil. So trust Him.**

But Trust is not a static thing. It is not just "let go and let God". In addition to trusting the Lord – we are told to do good; and to occupy as we remain sustained by God's faithfulness

Slide 13

(second half of 73:3)

Trust in the Lord.....**Do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.**

This word **dwell** doesn't just mean to abide in. But it is an invitation to **find rest and even peace** in God's provisions. When I think of feeding on God's faithfulness. I am reminded that He is our provider, our sustainer, and our security. He is our Good Shepherd.

We like to think of ourselves as a pack vicious Lions, but here is the reality. The Bible likens us to weak, helpless sheep. Sheep that are easily overcome by the enemy. Sheep can't depend on their own fighting skills or power. But only on the faithfulness of the shepherd.

Slide 14

Psalms 23:1–2 (NKJV) — 1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. **2** He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.

When we try to stand against evil in our own ability and power, we are like a bunch of defenseless sheep attempting to storm the lions den.

- 2. The second point is** that in addition to Trusting the Lord. We are to enjoy and savor the Lord's goodness.

Slide 15

4 Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

There are a lot of things that we might find delightful in this life, and I am grateful that God has blessed us with those things. But most of the things that we tend to find delight in, are temporary at best. We are invited to find our delight in the Lord Himself.

This word interpreted as delight **means to refresh oneself**. The invitation is to come and find the Lord's presence is not only encouraging and secure, but it is even refreshing.

I often think of the story of when Jesus stayed with Martha and with Mary. But while Mary sat at Jesus's feet and received from Him, we are told that Martha was distracted with much serving. Even to the point that she accused Jesus of not caring that she served alone, while her sister sat getting refreshed by Jesus.

There is such a danger for us to become distracted by everything going on around us, to the point that like Martha, we neglect to stop and just take opportunity to delight ourselves in the presence of the Lord.

When our delight is in the Lord, then the desires of our heart, will align with the desires of His heart and He will grant us those desires. But if instead of delighting ourselves in the Lord, we are distracted by much serving or fretting. Our priorities will be wrong and therefore our desire will no align with God's will.

3. The 3^d point is that in addition to trusting and delighting ourselves in the Lord. We are to commit our ways to Him.

Slide 16

5 Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.

This word commit means "to roll unto". The invitation is to take the weight off of our own shoulders and lay it upon God's shoulders. I promise you **He can bear that weight**.

Slide 17

1 Peter 5:7 (NKJV) — 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

There are so many of life's worries and circumstances that we often attempt to bear on our own shoulders. But then we are dismayed when we aren't able to carry the load. We then feel defeated when we can't stand against evil by our own power.

Paul acknowledged that our enemies are not flesh and blood, but they are spiritual. But he also acknowledged that our protection (armor) was not of ourselves, but it too is spiritual.

Slide 18

Ephesians 6:12–14 (NKJV) — 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. **13** Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and **having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore,.....**

Our position is that of defense. We are not called to charge and overcome the enemy. We are told to remain steadfast in our stance, under the protection of our spiritual armor. But that armor is only to enable us to stand in the midst of their attack. It is not for the purpose of us going out and slaying all the demons in the world. **We are not told to charge forward.** We are told to stand steadfast, because it is the Lord who will fight our battles for us.

Slide 19

Proverbs 21:31 (NKJV) — 31 The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But deliverance is of the LORD.

By the way that armor is – Spiritual Truth, God’s righteousness in Jesus Christ, the saving grace of the gospel, faith in God’s love and provision, eternal security in the blood of Jesus, and the un-yielding and unmovable truth of God’s word.

Holding with certainty to those things, we will be able to remain steadfast in our commitment to Jesus.

As we transfer the weight of our burdens unto the Lord, He will bring it to pass. He will bear the burden of getting us through those seasons of trials and tribulations.

Slide 20

6 He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday.

Satan is the accuser of the brethren. So often we are slandered and maligned because of our stance with Jesus. Maybe by an enemy, or maybe by a neighbor and even possibly by your own family. To speak truth today is often characterized as hate if that truth is not what others want to hear. Take a stand against sexual immorality or against the teachings of humanism and you will soon find yourself being slandered. But concerning Vs 6, Barnes notes:

Slide 21

“If you are slandered, if your character is assailed and seems for the time to be under a cloud, if reproach comes upon you from the devices of wicked men in such a way that you cannot meet it—then, if you will commit the case to God, He will protect your character, and will cause the clouds to disperse, and all to be as clear in reference to your character and the motives of your conduct as the sun without a cloud.”

Barnes

4. The 4th point is that are to rest in the Lord. As we put our trust in the Lord, find our delight in Him, and roll our burdens unto Him. We will be able to rest in the Lord.

Slide 22

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

The longer I walk with the Lord, the more I am learning **to cherish His invitation to find my rest in Him.**

This word rest literally **means to stand still.** Martha was caught up in a blur of activity, but Mary chose to take the opportunity to just sit and rest in the Lord's presence.

The whole world is so busy trying to find rest. Rest from the tyranny of evil, from war, from devastation. But most people are looking in all the wrong places. They are putting their trust in the wisdom of man, in political policies, and in governmental oversight. But man's wisdom and policies can't give you rest. Only God can provide the rest we need.

Man's heart is corrupted in sin and bent on evil. Until Christ reigns, there will always be war, and murder, and wickedness. No government or elected official is going to change that. Only Jesus can change the heart of sinful man. Jesus is the only true answer.

Slide 23

Psalm 46:8–10 (NKJV) — 8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, Who has made desolations in the earth. **9** He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire. **10 Be still, and know that I am God;** I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

Jesus will one day bring peace. But until that day, we are encourage to find our rest in His goodness, in His strength, in His grace, and in His Mercy. In the midst of a chaotic world, we are invited to **be still and know that He alone is God.**

If you find that you have been spending more time fretting over the circumstances of evil in the world today than you have in trusting, delighting, and resting in the Lord and His goodness. I invite you to take on a whole new perspective starting today.

We know the end of the Book. Evil does not win! So why do we so often act as though it might?

Slide 24

Psalm 2:1–6 (NLT) — **1** Why are the nations so angry? Why do they waste their time with futile plans? **2** The kings of the earth prepare for battle; the rulers plot together against the LORD and against his anointed one. **3** “Let us break their chains,” they cry, “and free ourselves from slavery to God.” **4 But the one who rules in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them.** **5** Then in anger he rebukes them, terrifying them with his fierce fury. **6 For the Lord declares, “I have placed my chosen king on the throne in Jerusalem, on my holy mountain.”**

That chosen King is Jesus Christ. He has already won the victory over death and Sin. He reigns in heaven and will soon return to reign here on earth. So when it seems as if evil is winning, rest assured, it has already lost.

Christ our King is on the Throne! **So cast off your fretting and dwell in the Goodness of our Lord, Jesus Christ. And allow yourself to start abiding in His rest today, and every day ahead, until He comes and take us home!**

Close in prayer