

## Wise Living In Troubled Times - Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40 (ESV)

Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! <sup>2</sup> For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. <sup>3</sup> Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. <sup>4</sup> Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. <sup>5</sup> Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. <sup>6</sup> He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. <sup>7</sup> Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! <sup>8</sup> Refrain from anger and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. <sup>9</sup> For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land. <sup>10</sup> In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there. <sup>11</sup> But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace. <sup>39</sup> The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble. <sup>40</sup> The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.

### Verse 1 - "1Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers!"

"When wicked people seem to be doing well and getting ahead, don't let it get under your skin and don't be tempted to be like them" (James Johnston, The Psalms 1-41, pg. 377, R Kent Hughes Editor). That is exactly what verse one means. There is an old phrase that goes like this, "Cheaters never \_\_\_\_\_ (prosper)." These days that is not true. It is often those that cheat, lie, and do all sorts of wicked things that prosper more in this life than those who hunger and pursue the righteousness of God, doing things according to God's holy way. The wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. Our non-Christian friends seem to be getting ahead further in life and are happier than we are. Being a Christian does not seem to be paying off. It is easy to grow envious of wrongdoers and jealous of their success (ibid 377). God says,

**Psalm 37:1 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup>Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers!

At school often the most popular people are those who get away with the most. The Christian students living for Christ get left behind in the social spectrum. This can be exceptionally frustrating. In the business world there is such a fine line between that which is legal and ethical and that which is unethical and illegal. It is easy to grow envious of those who use illegal means for financial, professional, and personal gain.

God asks of us not to grow envious of the wicked and don't let them frustrate you keeping you awake at night and angry during the day.

**Verse 2 - "For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb."**

When you see the evil of our day, the wicked flourishing, and the righteous suffering, and feel its impact it is wise to be aware of your own response. The Bible says do not let it frustrate you. Please don't destroy yourself with negative emotions. Anger, resentment, and jealousy erases, yes destroys, your confidence in God's goodness (The Expositors Bible Commentary Vol 5. pg. 298). The wicked do not have free reign. God reigns above them and somehow and, in some way, God is allowing such wickedness for God's purposes. I think one of those purposes for us who believe in Christ it is this. Instead of being envious of the wrong doers, God is preparing us for a day that makes the wickedness of our time look tame. I sense the restraining power of the Holy Spirit being withdrawn especially from the wicked and from those who serve other gods. In our spirits we sense something gone amiss. On the other hand, the restraining power of the Holy Spirit is stronger than ever on those who are truly seeking Christ and His righteousness. God allows our own sin to be exposed so we will daily repent and experience times of refreshment of the Holy Spirit. As awful is the wickedness of our day, God's goodness is ever more powerful for us to experience and know every day as we live every day for Jesus. **3. The greater the wickedness the greater we will know of God's goodness.** God uses their wickedness to draw us evermore close to the Lord Jesus Christ. God is separating the sheep from the goats and the true believers from the fake believers. That judgment has begun.

David tells us how we are able to rise above becoming frustrated and envious of wrong doers. **4. It is called having an eternal perspective.** We lift our eyes beyond the temporary and look ahead to the future. The future of the godly is absolutely glorious. The wicked will fade like the grass and will be no more. It may look like they are thriving today, but God will pull them out like weeds in the future. Psalm 37 is future oriented stating how wonderful it will be for

those who inherit the land. David repeats five times in this Psalm: “those who wait on the Lord shall inherit the land.” The land that David speaks of is not the Promised Land of Exodus. No, they already have that land. David is speaking of a much better land, the inheritance in heaven. Look beyond the temporary into the eternal and you will always have reason to live holy, godly lives unto the Lord Jesus Christ. **5. There is no wickedness in heaven.**

The Bible tells us that Abraham had this eternal perspective, waiting for “a better country” the heavenly one. **1 Peter 1:3-4 (ESV)** “<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,”

Dr Johnston writes, “Ultimately you will not be able to fight the temptation to envy the wicked unless you are looking forward to heaven too. If your mind is only on the things of this world you will feel powerless and sink to lower levels. Look at Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. **Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)** <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Jesus’ eternal perspective is what kept him obedient in the present. He is our example.

This week I received the news that my Dad’s only brother, my uncle Ray died. My Dad died in 2005 and since then my uncle Ray stepped in and God used him to make up for the loss of my father. Ray took over in so many ways. I was able to visit him 2 weeks ago. Some of you met him here when he visited. This is my point. I could not sleep feeling the sadness of his loss. I thought about him all night long and the role he played in our lives, an incredibly good role. Ray knew the Lord deeply and had a faith that is commendable, a faith I looked up to. When I woke up the first thought that went through my brain was, he was experiencing all the comforts of heaven. God gave me just a hint of the peace he was experiencing fully. I felt it in

my soul. God's Presence does affect us emotionally. My sense of loss was gone by knowing how much he has gained. It is called having an eternal perspective my friends. It is that perspective that we live with until the day we live in it. What a day that will be. We will receive our inheritance that Jesus died to pay for on the cross. There will be a complete separation of the wheat from the tares, the righteous from the wicked.

**6. Verse 3 - <sup>3</sup>Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.** The commentator writers, "Trust is faith, believing that God's promises are true and that He will keep His word. He will never let us down" (ibid 380). We can yield our entire lives to God, put all of our weight, and lean entirely on God. His Presence in us is why we can do good and remain faithful. Dr Bridges writes in his classic *Trusting God*, "When we stop and think about it, we know in our heart of hearts that God does not make any mistakes in our lives or anywhere else. God knows what He is doing. God is infinite in His wisdom. He always knows what is best for us and what is the best way to bring about that result" (*Trusting God*, pg. 118).

**7. Verse 4 - <sup>4</sup>Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.** When we are saved by God's grace through faith our vision of God begins to grow. God opens our eyes to see God's beauty and glory made clear throughout the Scriptures. "Suddenly we see for ourselves that God himself is the most attractive and beautiful being in the universe" (ibid. pg. 380). David writes, "We taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). David also writes, **Psalm 27:4 (ESV)** "<sup>4</sup>One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple."

An eternal perspective keeps your eyes more on God than the things of this world.

**8. When we have God, we have everything.** Nothing on earth compares to God. It is enjoying yourself so much in the Lord, that the one thing we want above all else is God himself.

When we delight in God what we receive is more of God. Our heart's desires are fulfilled by our holy God.

Verse 5-6 - <sup>5</sup> Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. <sup>6</sup> He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday." To commit your way to God is to give your complete burden over to God, to lift it from your shoulders and put it on God's shoulders to bear. This is casting all your cares and anxieties on God for you know He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7).

<sup>7</sup> Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! <sup>8</sup> Refrain from anger and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. Being quiet and still before God and waiting patiently on God is not easy at all. When we see evil gaining ground, we can get so frustrated. God says, "Be still. Wait patiently. Don't get angry. This is not the end of the story. God is in control. Verse 9 <sup>9</sup> For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land." The fate of the wicked is not good but for those who wait on the Lord, we inherit the eternal promised land. Verses 10-11. <sup>10</sup> In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there. <sup>11</sup> But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace." The wicked do all they can to harm the righteous but the weapons they use will one day be used against them even as God laughs at their efforts. Remember Mordecai.

Verses 39-40 <sup>39</sup> The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble. <sup>40</sup> The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him. When tempted to envy the wicked please spend time in Psalm 37 and God will talk you out of it. It takes an eternal perspective in order to survive and thrive in these days of wickedness. God has your future, and He will come

to judge the living and the dead. Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT2) <sup>11</sup>For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. Through Christ God has given to you an inheritance in heaven (Johnston pg. 385). Please never lose sight of that. Amen and Amen.