

Psalms: The Songs of the People of God
Psalm 37: A Change in Focus: From Envy to Trust
Sunday, June 10, 2018

Introduction

Living the Christian life isn't easy. The calling to pursue holiness is not for the weak, but by God's grace we can fight sin and strive to please Him trusting that He will bless our efforts. But at times it can seem like those outside of Christ are the ones receiving the blessings. Why do those who care nothing of God seem to prosper while the righteous suffer?

As David writes Psalm 37 he is writing to those who are watching the prosperity of the wicked and are tempted to frustration or envy. Psalm 37 is a wisdom Psalm and is organized as an acrostic. It reads like a series of proverbs, but they are all bound together making this point: The people of God must continue to trust Him. We must not be shortsighted, in the end the wicked will be judged and the righteous will be blessed.

The Primary Admonition: Don't Envy the Wicked (37:1-2)

David knows our temptations. He knows that sometimes we look around and we wonder why those who oppose God are doing well and those who love God suffer. But this is David's encouragement: Don't fret and don't be envious of them. Remember this: their prosperity is temporary.

How to Fight against Envy of the Wicked

As we walk through the Psalm David, like a good counselor, is helping us to remember what's true and where our focus should be.

Look Up: Remember the Hope We Have in God (37:3-11)

- **Trust in the Lord (vs. 3)** - At the heart of envy is a lack of trust in God. When we are frustrated by what we see in the lives of others we are admitting that we don't trust God's plan for our own lives.
- **Delight yourself in the Lord (vs. 4)** - Envy is driven by our desire for joy, but David knows that true joy is found in God Himself. So instead looking at other people's lives and wanting what they have, find your joy in God: Delight in the Lord.
- **Commit your way to the Lord (vs. 5)** - The word *commit* is a strong word that means to roll something over to another person. Do you wish that your life looked more like someone else's? Are you envious of what other people have? David says stop trying to control your own direction, instead trust God to direct your path.

- **Wait for the Lord (vs. 7)** - The natural question is, how long? How long do we trust, delight, and commit? Our calling is to wait patiently and trust that the Lord is in control. He will do what is right in His time.
- **Refrain from Anger (vs. 8-11)** - David knows how hard it is to wait patiently and he knows the temptation to be angry at what seems to be unjust results. He reminds us that anger only leads to evil (James 1:20) and we must trust that God will bring justice in His time. God promises that He will judge the wicked and bless the righteous (Matthew 5:5).

Don't Be Shortsighted: Remember The Future of the Wicked (37:12-22)

- **Verses 12-16** - We live in a world that is growing increasingly hostile toward the things of God. As those who love and desire to stand for the truth we can become fearful as we experience opposition and hostility. The reminder of the Psalm is that God is over all things and He laughs at those who oppose Him. In the end the wicked will be brought down by their own wickedness. (See Psalm 73, the testimony of Asaph)
- **Verses 17-22** - David reminds us that in the end God will set all things right. For now it may seem like the wicked have the advantage. You may become envious of others and think that faithfulness to God is a waste of time, but this perspective is shortsighted. In the end the wicked will be judged and the people of God will be blessed forever.

Don't Be Shortsighted: Remember God's Faithfulness to the Righteous (37:23-40)

- **God's Faithful Care and Preservation of those who are His (vs. 23-26)** David doesn't hide that the righteous will suffer, but he is confident in the care of God. We may stumble, but we don't fall completely because the Lord is holding us (2 Corinthians 4:7-9). As David looks back he has this testimony: God has always been faithful (vs. 25-26).
- **God protects those who are His as they live and speak for Him (vs. 27-33)** - Our temptation is to see the rest of the world living confidently in their sin and seemingly without consequence; if we aren't careful we can become jealous. We must remember that God will be just (vs. 27-29).
In our current cultural climate the truth is under attack. We can be fearful of the consequences of standing for truth and our fear can silence us, or we can trust God and speak. As we speak God will keep us (vs. 30-33).
- **God will save those who trust Him (vs. 34-40)** Yes, the wicked may prosper, but we must never believe their success, prosperity or positions of power are signs of true blessing. In God's plan the wicked may have seasons of prosperity, but in the end God will judge the wicked and save those who are His (Psalm 73:27-28).