

"The Steps of a Good Man"

Psalm 37 - Read vs. 1-23

As I pointed out last week, this is an acrostic psalm, with very similar form as the book of Proverbs where each two verses is its own context, and each of those verses start with a subsequent Hebrew letter.

Also pointed out last week, this psalm has more in it than we can get through in a week. I thought I might be able to finish it this week but that's not going to happen - there's just more here than I want to rush through.

Last week we looked at the first four (4) verses and several of the initial imperatives for the child of God (the "good man" of verse twenty-three) to follow to deal with the stress of this life.

- "Fret not...neither be thou envious" - vs. 1-2
- "Trust in the LORD, and do good" - vs. 3
- "Delight thyself also in the LORD" - vs. 4

Part 2

A. Vs. 5-6 - Gimmel (ג)

1. "Commit thy way unto the LORD"
 - a) The word for "commit" literally means to roll away, as a stone is rolled.
 - b) "Thy way" (דִּרְךְךָ) - a common word that is very similar in meaning to the word "walk" that we studied for several weeks in the morning message a few months ago - to walk or tread about. Here, it speaks of the path that is traveled and is used metaphorically for the path of life

that God has chosen for us to walk.

- c) We are to “roll” the burdens of this life onto the Lord and simply follow Him as He leads us.

Psalm 55:22

²² Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

1 Peter 5:7

⁷ Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Proverbs 16:3

³ Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

2. “Trust also in him” – connected with committing our life to the Lord – we are not very likely to trust in Him if we are trying to handle all of life’s burdens and trials on our own. The two are connected.

Proverbs 3:5-6

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

3. “And he shall bring it to pass” – if we roll our burden over on the Lord, and put simple trust in Him in all things, He will bring to pass in our lives what is best for us.
4. Vs. 6 - If we give ourselves over to the Lord, and don't worry about what we can't control, and just live for Him, then He will take care of our reputation, and our character.

B. Vs. 7 - Daled (T)

1. This verse is one of three, as previously mentioned, that have only one verse to the stanza (the "strophe"). There are three lines rather than the normal two in the other portions of this psalm.
2. "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him"
 - a) "Rest" - this is a verb meaning to be silent or to be still; to stand silent and still. It can be understood as being "silent in the Lord." Carries the idea "of waiting in silent patience or confidence for his interposition; or, in other words, of leaving the whole matter with him without being anxious as to the result" (Barnes).
 - b) "And wait patiently for him" - we're not likely to "wait patiently" if we're not resting in Him first.
 - (1) The word from which the two words "wait patiently" is taken (חַנּוּן) is an interesting one - although it can mean a variety of things, from whirling in motion as a dancer would to writhing in pain as a mother in labor.
 - (2) As used here in relation to resting in the Lord, even in times of pain and fear, we are to be patient with the Lord and wait for His leading before we take action to deal with whatever we are going through.
3. The second line of verse seven (7) points back to verse one (1) and restates the point that we are not to become angry and anxious because the wicked prosper. That's why "rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him" is given before this and connected with a colon - it's the

reason we can accomplish the "not fretting" part.

C. Vs. 8-9 - He (ה)

1. "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath"
 - a) "Cease" (רָפָה) - literally, to slacken or relax - in its use here, it means to leave it alone. Even when anger may seem justified, it's better to leave it alone.
 - b) The word for "anger" (אַף) literally means "nose or nostril." It's referring to the anger that makes us distort our appearance and literally breathe heavy.
 - c) The word for "forsake" (עָזַב) has a very similar meaning to the word "cease" - to loosen from - as with "cease," it means to leave it alone.
 - d) The word for "wrath" (חֶמֶה) is from a word that means "heat." It is a more severe word than that for "anger," with the idea of poison and the fever it causes. Anger and wrath are poisonous, and as we would avoid poison at all cost, we should avoid anger and wrath at all cost.
2. "Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil" - restates the first line and brings us back to the two previous times the words "fret not" are used.
3. Vs. 9 - God has all things under control and if we simply wait for Him to do things in His time and not get ahead of Him, we will be blessed ("inherit the earth").

D. Vs. 10-11 - Vav (ו)

1. Verse 10 has a connection with the previous verse and the idea of evil doers being "cut off" (or destroyed). Verse 10 defines what is meant by "cut off."
2. "But the meek shall inherit the earth" - in contrast to the "place" of the evil doers not being found, the place of the righteous is eternal.
 - a) "The meek" are those that are humble and gentle in contrast with the wicked spoken of throughout this psalm.
 - b) They "shall inherit the earth" and "shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" - synonymous parallelism.
 - (1) For the Israelite, this speaks to the Millennial reign of Christ when Israel lives peacefully in their land.
 - (2) For the child of God, by application, it speaks of a peaceful and contented life that we can live if we follow God and His Word.

Conclusion to this point: This psalm deals a great deal with how we, as children of God, deal with a fallen world and what to expect as we journey through life. These first few verses are meant to help us establish some parameters in our life as we deal with the world.

"Fret not...neither be thou envious"

"Trust in the LORD, and do good"

"Delight thyself also in the LORD"

"Commit thy way unto the LORD"

"Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him"

"Cease from anger, and forsake wrath"

An Atheist farmer often ridiculed people who believed in God. He wrote the following letter to the editor of a local newspaper: "I plowed on Sunday, planted on Sunday, cultivated on Sunday, and hauled in my crops on Sunday; but I never went to church on Sunday. Yet I harvested more bushels per acre than anyone else, even those who are God-fearing and never miss a service." The editor printed the man's letter and then added this remark: "God doesn't always settle His accounts in October." That editor was right!

Sometimes even dedicated Christians are tempted to complain because of what they see in the world around them. Perplexed by the success and prosperity of the wicked, oftentimes at the expense of the righteous, they ask, why doesn't the Lord do something about it? Why doesn't He reward those who fear Him, and judge those who disregard Him? Be patient. He will! True, He doesn't always "settle His accounts in October," but He does settle His accounts!

So if you're trying to do the will of God and you become discouraged because unjust people are getting ahead, don't be shortsighted. Remember what the psalmist David advised: "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither like the green herb." He went on to say, "For evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait upon the Lord shall inherit the earth."

II. THE FATE OF THE WICKED AND THE RIGHTEOUS - VS. 12-22

A. Vs. 12-13 - Zayin (י)

Even though the wicked will attack the child of God, relentlessly at times (more so as the end of this age draws nigh), the LORD will “have the last laugh,” so to speak, because no matter what happens on this earth, unless they come to Christ in repentance and faith, they will spend eternity in hell.

Psalm 2:4

⁴ He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

Proverbs 1:26 [the context is vs. 22-33]

²⁶ I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

B. Vs. 14-15 - Khet (כֶּת)

This set of verses further expands on the previous two. In these verses, the contrast is made between the wicked and the upright - the upright being seen as “the poor and needy,” terms we’ve seen before referring to how the child of God is viewed by the world (the wicked). They are said to be of “upright conversation” - their conversation (the Hebrew word - דֶּרֶךְ - means road) is their course of life, mode of conduct.

Verse fifteen (15) can be seen as the wicked reaping what they’ve sown.

C. Vs. 16-17 - Tet (ט)

These verses expand on “the poor and needy” of the previous two verses. The practical application of this carries over to the spiritual as well.

1. It’s better to have little and be righteous than to have much and be wicked - the practical.

Proverbs 15:16-17

¹⁶ Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith.

¹⁷ Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

Proverbs 16:8

⁸ Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.

Ecclesiastes 4:6

⁶ Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit.

2. What little we may have is still a blessing from God, as He is all we need in this life. Our wealth is in Him and what He has prepared for us – the spiritual.

1 Timothy 6:6

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain.

Hebrews 13:5-6

⁵ Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

⁶ So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

D. Vs. 18-19 - Yod (י)

These verses continue the point from the previous two about the righteous. The Lord knows what His children are going through and He is there with them every step of the way and will carry them on into eternity because they are His ("their inheritance shall be for ever").

Verse nineteen (19) gives us the truth that God will take care of His own, no matter what comes their way.

E. Vs. 20 - Kaf (כ)

In contrast to the previous four verses, the wicked will simply perish – for eternity.

F. Vs. 21-22 - Lamed (ל)

1. Verse twenty-one (21) shows the contrast between the wicked when they are destitute and the upright in their penury. The wicked basically steals to survive while the upright shows mercy and gives help to those in need even if they don't have much.
2. Verse twenty-two (22) again shows the contrast to the final end of each – the righteous will “inherit the earth” (they will be with the Lord in His Millennial Reign) while the wicked will “be cut off” (be separated from the Lord forever).

III. THE SECURITY OF THE RIGHTEOUS – VS. 23-31

A. Vs. 23-24 - Mem (מ)

There are wonderful blessings in this verse regarding “the good man” – the righteous.

The word “good” is italicized in this verse because it's supplied by the translators for clarity. It's there as an adjective for “man” because of the context both before and after which speaks of the righteous and good man.

1. His “steps” (rare Hebrew word that speaks of

literal steps or paces a man takes) are used figuratively here referring to one's walk in life. Those steps "are ordered by the LORD" - He is directing our very path and every step in that path, if we let Him. The more right we are with Him, the more we will see those steps He lays out for us.

2. "He delighteth in his way" - there are two viable meanings here: either the LORD delights in the way of the good man, or the good man delights in God's direction. Just by virtue of word order in the first line, as well as from what follows, I am inclined to interpret the pronouns as "He (the good man) delighteth in His (the Lord's) way." We should take delight in whatever God has planned for us and do His will heartily.

Colossians 3:23

²³ And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

3. "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down" - although the good man, the upright one, may (and often will) be subject to trials and temptations and will fall because of them, there is the promise here, as well as throughout Scripture, that he will never be forsaken or destroyed. As we've seen in two previous psalms (and one yet to come), we are under His protective wings.

Psalms 17:8

⁸ Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,

Psalms 36:7

⁷ How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!

therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

Psalm 91:4

⁴ He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

4. The reason we aren't destroyed is because we are upheld "with his hand" – and He can never lose us, nor can we ever lose Him.

John 10:28-30

²⁸ And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

²⁹ My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

³⁰ I and my Father are one.

B. Vs. 25-26 – Nun (נ)

1. "I have been young, and now am old" – clearly David had lived a long life by this point and was making some observations about the path that Lord leads people to walk and His provisions for their journey.

- a) The first observation he makes is an absolute rule (followed by a general rule). We know it's an absolute rule because there are other texts of Scripture that state it emphatically – "yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken." It may seem like God has forsaken at times, but He hasn't nor ever will.

Hebrews 13:5

⁵ Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

- b) The second observation of verse twenty-five (25) is a general rule but there are exceptions. There is an old theological rule that translates as: "The corporal promises are to be understood with the exception of the cross [that is, the cross of suffering we may be called to bear] and chastisement."

I've made this comment several times in our study of the book of Psalms - that the general rule is what's given but there may be exceptions, as is the case here. Although there are exceptions, in the end, when this life is over, there will never be another need or want.

2 Corinthians 4:8-10

⁸ We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

⁹ Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

¹⁰ Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

Philippians 4:11-12

¹¹ Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

¹² I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

2. Verse twenty-six (26) points back to verse twenty-three (23) and is speaking about the "good man," or the righteous one.
 - a) "He is ever merciful" - already seen in verse twenty-one (21) speaking of the upright.
 - b) "And lendeth" - verse twenty-one (21) uses the term giveth (synonymous parallels).
 - c) "And his seed is blessed" - the descendants of a righteous man are blessed.

Several years ago the Christian Life and Faith magazine presented some unusual facts about two families. In 1677 an immoral man married a very licentious woman. Nineteen hundred descendants came from the generations begun by that union. Of these, 771 were criminals, 250 were arrested for various offenses, 60 were thieves, and 39 were convicted for murder. Forty of the women were known to have venereal disease. These people spent a combined total of 1300 years behind bars and cost the State of New York nearly 3 million dollars.

The other family was the Edwards family. The third generation included Jonathan Edwards who was the great New England revival preacher and who became president of Princeton University. Of the 1,344 descendants, many were college presidents and professors. One hundred eighty-six became ministers of the gospel, and many others were active in their churches. Eighty-six were state senators, three were Congressmen, 30 judges, and

one became Vice President of the United States. No reference was made of anyone spending time in jail or in the poorhouse. (The only exception to this was Aaron Bur.)

Not all children of good parents become useful citizens, nor do all the offspring of wicked people turn out bad. Yet the possibility of a child getting the right start in life is enhanced if he comes from a home where love prevails, the Bible is taught, and prayer is offered.

Father, Mother, when you live for the Lord, you provide a strong incentive for your children to choose the Christian way of life. Parental example is extremely powerful – either for good or for evil.

C. Vs. 27-28a - Samech (ס)

D. Vs. 28b-29 - Ayin (ע)

E. Vs. 30-31 - Pe (פ)

IV. THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF THE RIGHTEOUS - vs. 32-40

A. Vs. 32-33 - Tsade (צ)

B. Vs. 34 - (Qof) - (ק)

C. Vs. 35-36 - Resh - (ר)

D. Vs. 37-38 - Shin (ש)

E. Vs. 39-40 - Tav (ת)

