

The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth

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[0 : 00] First of all, from Psalm 37, and then in Matthew chapter 5. Psalm 37, reading the first 11 verses.

Threaten not yourself because of evildoers. Be not envious of wrongdoers, for they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.

Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in him and he will act. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your justice as the noonday.

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him. Threaten not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices.

[1 : 03] Befriend from anger and forsake wrath. Threaten not yourself. It tends only to evil. For the evildoer shall be cut off. But those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.

In just a little while the wicked will be no more. Though you look carefully at this place, he will not be there. But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace.

And then following on from verse 11, we read in Matthew 5, these verses before us. Jesus preaching the sermon on the mountain.

We read there that Jesus, seeing the crowds, he went up to the mountain. And when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. And then the words that we read in Psalm 37, verse 5 now. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

[2 : 09] Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those when others revile you and persecute you, and utter all kinds of evil against you, falsely in my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.

For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. May God add his blessing to these readings from his holy word. And as we've just been reading in the Sermon on the Mount, or the part that we read of the sermon, we see there how Jesus taught what we might call the paradox, the apparent contradiction of a life lived for the glory of God.

The poor in spirit having a kingdom. Those who mourn being comforted. Those who are meek, those who are humble, receiving the fullness of the earth as reward.

[3 : 30] And it's really this whole aspect of what the true believer is, who is poor in spirit, who mourns for his sins, who is meek and humble.

It's this aspect of what a true believer is that we find even here in Psalm 37. The one who waits in the Lord. The one who, the person who delights in the Lord.

The person who's got no status that the world reckons to form success and value. The person who's loved by God and who seeks to honour God.

The person who doesn't seek the world's standards, but seeks God's standards. And that way of life, that conduct, that God-glorifying walk, that God-glorifying walk with God is, as we said, certainly expressed here in Psalm 37.

It's this psalm that's given so much direction to the Lord's people over the decades, over the centuries. This psalm that's encouraged the Lord's people, whether we sing it, whether we read it, whether we meditate upon it.

[4 : 42] It's a psalm that gives a God-directed perspective on what's of true value, true worth, what brings true satisfaction in a life lived before God and a life lived for the glory of God.

The psalm was read just a few nights ago on live TV in America in light of President Trump's rather controversial holding of the Bible outside an Episcopal church.

And a few days later on the program, the live show that James Corden, the actor, presents, James Corden's father, a Christian, a Christian bookseller, read from the psalm.

In fact, he read from verse 3 to verse 7, he spoke of how the psalm, one of his favorite psalms, and how encouraged he is by the words that we ourselves read this evening.

And so we're going to consider certainly part of the psalm, a psalm that gives so much encouragement to the Lord's people. And as we read these first 11 verses, we see that God gives a series of commands.

[5 : 55] God in his love is giving commands. Commands for the well-being of our souls. Commands that call us to a steadfast, consistent obedience to God in the way that we live, in the way that we conduct ourselves before God.

It's a life lived in relation to God. And a life that's lived in relation to God, whose kindness to us is such.

He gives us these commands to follow. These commands, we might say, that really are in relation to the Ten Commandments, how we love God, and how we love one another, how we love our neighbor.

And you see, there's a whole series of commands that God gives in this psalm. I've counted 12 separate commands not to fret over evildoers, to trust in the Lord and do good, dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.

We'll be considering that particular command later to delight ourselves in the Lord, the command to commit your way to the Lord and again to trust in him, the command to be still before the Lord and the command to wait patiently for him.

[7 : 12] And again, repeated, the command to don't fret over those who prosper in their ways, over someone who succeeds by his evil devices.

And then the command to refrain from anger, to first, and again, repeated again, not to fret ourselves, as the psalm writer tells us, as David tells us, it only leads to evil.

Well, separate commands that really add up to a life that's lived well in the midst of an evil world. Now, this original, this psalm in the original language is actually what we call an acrostic psalm, the ABC, if you like.

Each double verse, it begins with a new letter of the Hebrew alphabet. I suppose a way to memorise the psalm, we have the psalm before us, not in an English acrostic sense, but certainly the psalm that gives so much teaching how we live before God and before others.

But then you might think, well, this psalm, Psalm 37, if it's an ABC format, as it were, then if there's a priority in how we live our lives, you might think, well, why is it that the psalmist begins with this command not to fret ourselves over evildoers?

[8 : 35] Why is this taking us a priority? Well, surely the answer lies in the very fact of who we worship. I mean, the first commandment that God gave to the Israelites through Moses, remember the first commandment, was you shall have no other gods before me.

Well, here in this psalm, the psalmist giving direction how we're to live before God, not to fret ourselves over evildoers, really not to be so concerned, not to be so envious of a lifestyle that makes self God rather than worshipping the one true God.

And so it's not for the Lord's people to upset ourselves where, you know, when we see success in a carefree life, when that life is so contrary to God's word and God's law.

It's not for us to envy those who make an idol of self, an idol of riches, an idol of self-righteous contempt for the one true God.

Because life in all its fullness, life that truly satisfies, doesn't consist in our possessions or in our riches or in our status symbols.

[9 : 53] Life in all its fullness isn't about glorifying self. Life in all its fullness consists in glorifying God and following the Savior, the Lord Jesus.

Life lived to God's glory is a life learning process, life learning in being content in every circumstance. We noticed that a few weeks ago when we were considering Paul's words when he spoke of his learning to be content in every circumstance.

And so it's really the height of foolishness to think that life in all its fullness is enjoyed by those whom the psalmist calls evildoers, whose God, in fact, is themselves.

And yet there's that temptation, that temptation for believers to envy the wicked, to envy a lifestyle that's so contrary to what God sets as the standard for holiness and godliness.

There is a temptation to be jealous of the seeming freedoms of those whose cares and troubles seem to be absent when we see the suffering that the Lord's people endure.

[11 : 06] The psalmist of Psalm 73, he had that particular attitude at first. At first, he was so envious of those whose life seemed so carefree and trouble-free and like himself when he grumbled about his own trials and sufferings.

That psalm writer later acknowledged that his initial thinking was so wrong. The fact is there, believers, we can have that tendency, that temptation to look longingly, even enviously, at those who have no love for God and yet those who seem to enjoy the good things of life.

You see, that yielding to that kind of temptation really is a dissatisfaction with the blessings that God gives you in his perfect measure.

And here in the psalm, Psalm 37, David, King David, he knows the reality of that envy. And so he's saying, don't fret, don't fret because of evil people.

Don't be envious of those who do wrong. Don't burn with envy. Don't be jealous of those who do wrong. So David's recognizing a reality of that envy, a burning desire for the rewards of greed and power, ruthless ambition, self-gratification, envy that's caused and continues to cause the destruction of so many people.

[12 : 38] We read many examples in Scripture of such destruction. Lot's wife, for example, remember when Lot and his family were leaving Sodom and Lot's wife looked back with longing at the city, that desperately evil city that she and the family were leaving and were told that God sent judgment upon Lot's wife for her looking back with envy and what she perceived to be lacking in her life and were told that she was turned into a pillar of salt.

Jesus has so much to say in this whole matter of not burning with envy, of not being jealous of the wickedness of life, that jealousy that leads to a desire to have things that have no place in a Christian's heart.

You read in Luke chapter 17 and Jesus speaks of the future time when he speaks of his return and Jesus will come as judge. Jesus speaking of the eternal consequences of those who look back with envy to the delights of the world when Jesus returns and Jesus speaking of that eternal separation between those who put their trust in him and those who've lived a selfish desire.

as he says such as in the days of Noah and Lot and Jesus speaking of condemnation of those who would turn back referring the world to Christ and Jesus giving that stark warning in just a few words.

Luke 17, 32 remember Lot's wife and that's a warning for all who love the world who love a world that's in rebellion against God.

[14 : 26] Why do we envy those whose hearts are in the world rather than in the Lord Jesus? I mean the joys and the delights of a self-centred worldview these joys are temporary they're fleeting they're passing I think even this very lockdown has shown us that the so-called pleasures of the world are fleeting they're not of the essence of true living before God.

And so David's telling us here of those whose hearts are steeped in a rebellious world he tells us in verse 2 for like the grass they'll soon wither like green plants they'll soon die away.

And the pleasures of the world they are just that blink of an eye they may look new and fresh as fresh grass on a summer's day a day like today that same grass will wither it will die just as those who have no love for God will pass away without hope without that true eternal satisfaction of security eternal security for their souls.

You're to love God to have no other gods before God it's for you it's for me for each one of us to seek him first and in that seeking to have that desire of heart that desire not for the pleasures of the world not for the idols that so drag us away from God but to have that true desire to know God to follow him and to serve him for all our days.

And it's here as David outlines here in the psalm how that true desire is fulfilled and by as David shows us here through abiding by God's word and God's God's commands these we might see these building blocks of life that that help us to live a life a life lived well for the glory of God and we're going to look at some of these commands this evening these commands that really concern your day-to-day relationship with the one true God these commands as we notice trust in the Lord delight in the Lord commit your way to the Lord and be still before God in other words to have that total change that total change of direction in your life that focuses your life away from the wicked away from evildoers and a life lived towards God and his glory so let's look at these commands trust in the Lord and delight in the Lord as you see in verses 3 and 4 this is the antidote to burning with envy towards those whose lives are really lives live beyond the glorification of God this antidote to burning with envy is to trust in God and to delight in the Lord it's to live for him with all your soul and strength and mind to live in reliance upon him and dependence upon him for all things and that's what

[17 : 44] David's doing here in verses 3 and 4 he's redirecting your heart to God with this command to trust in him and with a command to delight in him just think just briefly with regard to these commands to trust in other words to have that full dependence in God for all things that relying in God the Lord who provides God who rules God who gives God whose promises are utterly trustworthy that trust that faith in God for all things that faith in the one who has promised never to leave you never to forsake you trusting in him who promises you life everlasting promises you that security in him for all eternity and for you who know him as Lord for you who are in Christ by faith you remember you've trusted in him with your life you've trusted in him for your salvation you've trusted your very soul for all eternity well trust him even now in this life in the life that he gives you this side of eternity trust in him as Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1:3 in that relation to that trust trust for all that we need for life and godliness and the heart the person that that trusts in the Lord for life and godliness she won't envy the wicked she won't be jealous of anything or anyone whose trust is in themselves possessions the power their particular status it's the heart the person that trusts in the Lord that person heart is directed to God to the one who provides all things one who's content in every circumstance so keep trusting in God keep trusting in the one who who promises you and provides for you all that you need for life and for godliness and have that delight to express in your heart as David expressed in another psalm that delight to know that your cup truly runs over with the goodness that God gives you you know that that salvation that you know in

Christ is full and abiding and overflowing so be content then in Christ trust trust in him and to know that that a life lived well in faith and trust is a life lived well for the glory of God and we see it further in that verse three that that relates to this whole aspect of contentment living a life that's that's righteous righteous living knowing that contentment and enjoying all the blessing that God gives you that God showers upon you that God gives you so that you might enjoy him now and forever and these wonderful words that we read in verse three really think captures this whole aspect of living well to the glory of God these two simple words and yet words that contain so much meaning so much relevance these words that tell us to befriend faithfulness befriend faithfulness well think of what

David's telling us here when you think of friendship in relation to the word befriend friendship suggests a relationship a relationship of trust a friend whom you know whom you love a friend in whose company you delight and that that tending of a relationship that nurturing a relationship is based in trust you befriend faithfulness and then that indicates a faithfulness to the one whom you are friends with of course we know that ultimately in the marriage context the faithfulness of one spouse to another the friendship that you nurture that you engender through faithfulness and we think of that befriend faithfulness then then think of that in relation to God think of your walk with God a faithful walk with the

Lord delighting to have that relationship with God delighting to be faithful to him delighting to be so faithful to him that you're not going to wander down into various paths by ways that have no place in the life of the believer and that's confirmed in the words that we read in the Apostle James James' epistle and he tells us chapter 4 verse 4 that friendship with the world is enmity with God so the question has to be asked of whom or of what are you friends is it friendship of the world that counts most in your life or is it friendship with God is it that friendship that is shown in your faithfulness to the one true God is your faithfulness to God that fulfillment of the chief purpose the chief end of your life to glorify

God and to enjoy him forever or is it simply friendship with the world and all its transient all its passing pleasures that really have no value at all because where your ultimate enjoyment lies indicates where your heart's desire is where your delights truly lie see the person who enjoys friendship with the world will have no friendship with God but the person who befriends faithfulness serves God and delights in that relationship that he has that she has with God he'll find she'll find that her true fulfillment in life is to honor God to glorify him and to find true pleasure in that relationship that she knows that he knows in God in the Lord Jesus Christ and so David tells us here in verse 4 delight yourself in the

[24 : 30] Lord and he'll give you the desires of your heart you might ask well what does it mean to delight in the Lord well surely it means this it means that striving to know God striving to know more and more through knowing him through his work through the Bible delighting in God means following the Lord Jesus serving him being his disciple as you love him as you grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus as you grow in that knowledge of God delighting in knowing God delighting in obeying God delighting to go where God sends you delighting to do his will to do whatever God asks you to do delighting in God that thrills your heart every time you hear the name of the Lord Jesus your savior delighting to commune with God even in your time of prayer and delighting to know true fellowship with the one who's called you to himself and we have to say this as well that really captures this whole aspect of delighting in God delighting in God involves delighting in what

God delights in what does God delight in God the Father delights in God the Son remember at the baptism of Jesus when the Father called out that this is my Son in whom I love with him I'm well pleased and I might say this too what else does God delight in well God delights in his church in Psalm 45 verse 11 we read these words well we read of God delighting in the beauty of the bride of Christ the delighting in the church and ask again yourself is the Lord Jesus the object of your delight is the church itself the church the church of the Lord Jesus is the church your delight is it your delight so much so that you love the Lord's people that you love to be in fellowship one with another I think that really has to be a test of your delighting in God you delight in the

Lord Jesus and you delight in the blessing of the fellowship that you have one with another in Christ so that delighting in God that delighting in his word that delighting in Christ delighting with the Lord's people and in the Lord's people well that delight involves desire true desire simplest desire what you desire with all your heart that delighting God is going to lead to your heart desiring to honour him to please him to serve him to delight in his presence to delight in his fellowship with God to enjoy his presence and to anticipate that joy with him in the glory of heaven these delights aren't for selfish gain they're not for any kind of pleasure principle the sort of instant gratification that Freud spoke of no true desire true delight comes from a heart that truly rejoices in God and truly desires to do God's will and truly desires to serve him because he is God he's Lord he's your saviour he is the almighty and your delight surely to delight in him to desire him and to desire that others know him as Lord and saviour and that delighting and those who delight in God those who desire God are those who are humble in heart later in verse 11 of Psalm 37 we read these words the words that Jesus echoed in the Sermon on the

Mount but the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace meek those who as Jesus says will inherit the earth those whose ultimate inheritance as the saints of God that ultimate inheritance is in the new heavens and the new earth you who are in Christ will have and know that eternal joy and you'll reign with him you who are meek humble you who serve him with all your heart you have that promise of the possession even now of the peace of God that passes all understanding that peace that you have with him now and will know in all eternity and the more that you delight in God the more that your heart's desire is focused on him and loving God and loving your neighbour the more you'll have that desire to seek first the kingdom of God just as Jesus commanded us to do again that surely has to be the desire of your heart desire not for riches not for fame not for power but to seek first the kingdom of God to seek that his kingdom's advanced even in our land even in the world to show your love for him who first loved you and in your relationship with God the one whom you trust whom you delight in whom you rely on totally whom you depend upon holy then yes you will face troubles you will face hardships you will face difficulties you will face dangers but again we're given that assurance even here in the psalm that when these times do happen to cast your care your cares on the

Lord as you see in verse five and verse six to commit your way to the Lord and the wording here in the psalm is literally to roll your cares on the Lord like a big boulder to roll that heavy stone on the Lord something that's been concerning you something so demanding as Peter said again in one of his letters to cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you so that when you do go through the waters of adversity when you do pass through the flames of suffering well you'll know you know that you have a Lord who's with you even through these times of difficulty you know that you have the Lord before you so that you can roll upon him that burden that the burdens of care the burdens that you have even even in your heart and you can roll them upon

[31 : 39] God whose arms are waiting to take that burden yes whose shoulders can bear that burden because he's the Lord Almighty whose love for you is rooted in all eternity roll your cares on the Lord commit to him these cares these concerns of your heart because even that very committing to God your cares is an act of trust trusting in the Lord knowing that he's able yes willing to deal gently with you even as you cast your cares on the Lord to read in verse six of the psalm here the result of that rolling unto God that that weight that burden of our concerns actually the consequence will be a blessing from God or blessing the one who trusts in him so if your burden your care is such that it concerns your own soul your own self if your burden is such that concerns the very progress of the gospel in the land then commit to him that care that concern call upon him in prayer and know that the heart rejoices when you do cast your cares on the

Lord because he's promised to sustain you and answer according to his perfect goodness his perfect righteousness so we have these promises of God these promises that God gives us in this psalm and so what's our response to all that we've seen so far well surely the response is to be again a command a command to follow verse 7 to be still before God to be silent before God as we were hearing this morning there's a time to be silent and a time to speak and so often I think we forget that time to be silent before God to wake upon God to hear him speak to us through his word to hear his voice speak to you to comfort you to encourage you to draw you to himself to bring you back to himself as you live and seek to live in trust and faithfulness to him so be still before God even in your anxious heart wait upon

God be silent before him when you are still before God silent before God yes seek to to hear his voice to open your ears to that voice and yes to meditate upon all that he's given to you in his promises of his faithfulness towards you and remember he delights in you we're thinking of delighting in God remember God delights in all who are his as you're silent before God hear him speak to you of that greatness of God's love towards you he delights in you his desire is for your salvation for your sanctification for your being with him for all eternity and so thank him for his grace thank him for his mercy praise him for that peace that you enjoy with him that abundant peace that yes truly passes all understanding and yes put your trust in him today and live as one who truly does befriend faithfulness for the glory of his name amen let us pray lord teach us we pray how we should and must befriend faithfulness how we seek to live for you to know that friend that is closer than a brother and to be faithful in all that we are and all that we do in serving you lord we thank you for your word and we pray truly that we will abide by your commands to follow your commands as to how we must love you and our neighbor as ourselves teach us lord help us maybe not simply that here and then forget your word but teach us lord how we might retain your word and apply it in our lives continue with us now lord we pray we ask these things in and through the name of

Jesus amen well we're going to sing part of psalm 37 now not words that we read but certainly words that we're going to sing from that psalm words from verse 23 to 27 a good man's footsteps by the lord are ordered aright and in the way wherein he walks he greatly doth delight 23 to 27 psalm 37 to god's verse a good that soon sets by the lord our lord doth let arise and in the way wherein he walks he greatly doth delight although he fall yet shall he not be as an latter way because the lord with his own hand a whole sin might live hear i have been young and now an old yet have i never seen the just man let nor that is he the hand got secret

Deeper from evil and to root And dwell forevermore Let's close in prayer.

[38 : 49] May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.