

There Is A Future For The Righteous

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[0:00] Please take your Bibles and open them up this morning again to the book of Psalms. We've been walking our way through several of the Psalms this summer and we've come to Psalm! chapter 37 this morning. If you don't have a copy of God's Word with you, if you didn't bring one, that's okay. We have them in the seat backs nearby and feel free to make use of that. Our text is Psalm! chapter 37. It is another Psalm of David and when you've found that, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word this morning. Psalm! chapter 37.

David writes, Fret not yourself because of evildoers. Be not envious of wrongdoers, for they will soon fade like 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. Fret not yourself over the one who prospers in His way, over the man who carries out evil devices. Refrain from anger and forsake wrath. Fret not yourself. It tends only to evil. For the evildoers 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 His place, He will not be there. But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace. The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at Him. But the Lord laughs at the wicked, for He sees that His day is coming.

The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and the needy, to slay those whose way is upright. Their sword shall enter their own heart and their bows shall be broken. Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous. The Lord knows the days of the blameless and their heritage will remain forever. They are not put to shame in evil times. In the days of famine they shall have abundance, but the wicked will perish. The enemies of the Lord are like the glory of the pastures. They vanish like smoke. They vanish away. The wicked borrows but does not pay back. But the righteous is generous and gives. For those blessed by the Lord shall inherit the land, but those cursed by Him shall be cut off. The steps of a man are established by the Lord when he delights in his way.

[2:55] Though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds His hand. I have been young and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or His children begging for bread. He is ever lending generously and His children become a blessing. Turn away from evil and do good. So shall you dwell forever. For the Lord loves justice. He will not forsake His saints.

They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell upon it forever. The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom and His tongue speaks justice. The law of His God is in His heart. His steps do not slip. The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death. The Lord will not abandon him to his power or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial. Wait for the Lord and keep His way, and He will exalt you to inherit the land. You will look on when the wicked are cut off. I have seen a wicked, ruthless man spreading himself like a green laurel tree, but he passed away, and behold, he was no more. Though I sought him, he could not be found. Mark the blameless and behold the upright, for there is a future for the man of peace, but transgressors shall be altogether destroyed. The future of the wicked shall be cut off.

The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord. He is their stronghold in times of trouble. The Lord helps them and delivers them. He delivers them from the wicked and saves them because they take refuge in Him. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever.

Father, we pray as we just sang, God, would you show us Christ? Would you reveal your glory through the preaching of your word this morning? We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. One of my favorite games to play as a kid was the game of life. Have you ever played the game of life? If you've played the game, then you know that you quite literally work your way through many of life's important milestones. You get an education, you get your first job, you get married, you have kids, and you work your way all the way through the winding turns until you get to the end of the game and you retire. And the point of the game is whoever stacks up the most money by the end of the game wins the game of life. Imagine playing the game of life with someone who has no regard whatsoever for the rules of the game. So you take a few turns and after a while you realize when nobody is looking, when they think you're not looking, they slip a couple extra hundreds out of the bank and into their money pile. And when it comes time for them to pick their career, they stack the cards in their favor so they make sure that they get the highest paying job in the game. And when they spin the wheel, they make certain that they only land on all the good tiles. And if they do accidentally land on something bad, well, they just blame the wheel and they spin again. Meanwhile, there you are trying your very best, playing the game according to the rules. And yet you are struggling to get by. It's totally unfair. And their little car is cruising their way through the game of life while your little car is struggling, moving at a snail's pace, paying off your debts, following all the rules. You would probably be frustrated playing that game, wouldn't you? In fact, you would probably at some point wonder, where in the world is mom or dad? Don't they care that the rules are being broken?

[6:50] And won't they come and set things right and make certain that things are played by the rules? This isn't how it should be. And yet sadly, this unfair experience is oftentimes not just a game. For many, this is how real life goes. You may have experienced some of this frustration yourself in your own life.

Your non-believing neighbors who do not follow the Lord, do not profess faith in Christ, do not seek to obey his law. They are seeming to have life on easy mode while you face trial after trial after trial your co-worker lies and cheats his way into yet another promotion while you just keep your head down and quietly do your job and no one seems to notice. Why is it so? And you may be prone to wonder, well, where is God in all of this? Does he not see how unfair this is? Will he not step in and make this right? Does he not care that the wicked seem to succeed while the righteous seem to struggle?

This is the tension that David is dealing with in Psalm chapter 37. He wrestles with this tension of the success of the wicked and the struggle of the righteous. But in the end, he calls all of God's people to lift up our head from the game for just a minute, take a step back and remember the confidence that we have in our good God and the promises that he's made to us in Christ. Here's the main idea for us this morning in Psalm chapter 37 is this. God's promised future produces present faithfulness despite our present frustration. And the Psalm, as you may have noticed, as I read is long as 40 verses long and it's actually an acrostic poem in the Hebrew. It's one of several in the book of Psalms.

It is a wisdom Psalm and you may have noticed that it, it kind of reads a little bit more like the book of Proverbs than it does like a Psalm. And in fact, several of these verses, the first verse is quoted verbatim in the book of Proverbs in Proverbs 24 verse 19. This is family wisdom that's passed down from King David to King Solomon and now down to us this morning. And so because this is a wisdom Psalm and because it is an acrostic poem, it's not really progressing linearly like many of the texts do. It doesn't go in a straight line from verse 1 to verse 40. And so we're not going to walk straight through it like we ordinarily would in a more linear text. Rather, we're going to take it in three clear themes. Now, hopefully you heard, as I read through the Psalm, three clear movements that we see here in Psalm 37. Again, we're going to see our present frustration, our promised future, and our patient faithfulness. This will be our outline this morning. If you're taking notes, our present frustration, our promised future, and our patient faithfulness. First, let's consider our present frustration. This Psalm, like many of the Psalms, it again, it makes this clear distinction to us between these two groups of people. There are the righteous and there are the wicked. Two groups of people, every single person in the world, every single person in this room belongs to one or the other of these two groups. You either are counted righteous by faith in Christ. That's the only way to be in this group. Or you are by nature, default, you are in this category of the wicked. There's no neutral. There's no third category. There's nowhere in between. Two groups of people, the

righteous or the wicked. And that wickedness is seen, David shows us, in the fruit and all sorts of bad fruit in a person's life. David calls them evildoers, wrongdoers in verse one. He says that they plot against the righteous. In verse 12, they gnash their teeth at them. They draw the sword. They bend their bows to bring down the poor and the needy and to slay those whose way is upright. Apparently, these wicked people, they are plotting and scheming ways to destroy the righteous. They're not indifferent towards the righteous. They don't ignore the righteous. They are antagonistic. They get ahead by putting the righteous ones down. Verse 32 says, the wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death. We recently finished going through the book of Genesis. Don't you remember? In the Garden of

Eden, this is the ongoing conflict ever since the Garden of Eden between that seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. This is ongoing enmity between those who belong to the enemy, that great serpent Satan, and those who belong to the Lord. Ultimately, those who belong to Christ. Church, we have to remember that we are not in peacetime. We are in wartime. And Satan and all who belong to him are presently waging war against all who belong to the Lord. Just last week in Nigeria, you may have seen this, the Fulani people attacked the village of Neridon in Nigeria, targeting, especially, specifically targeting Christians. I mean, this was not a random attack. They went from house to house shooting and ultimately killed 30 professing Christians.

[12 : 46] Eleven of them were children. The youngest was three years old. Church, it's hard for us to fathom that sort of hardship and persecution here where we live. I mean, my goodness, in Allendal and Mount Pleasant, we can hardly even wrap our minds around this, but this is very real and is happening to our brothers and sisters throughout the world, even right now. And what's worse, those who gave an interview afterwards, they said that the local police refused to come in time to help.

Our brother Sampson in Ghana is still on the run for his life. His church is still scattered. His people are still being hunted and they have made appeal after appeal after appeal to every form of authority that they can think of, and yet every form of authority has turned them a blind eye to their struggles and their persecutors. Get away with it. Why is this so? Do you ever get frustrated by this?

How the wicked just seem to succeed and they get away with whatever they want to do while the righteous struggle? How is it fair that so many false prosperity gospel teachers are living in luxury and abundance, while so many gospel preaching church planters are struggling to make ends meet? How is that fair?

This is the frustration that we often face here in a fallen world. And then you add to it the confusion that we feel because God's word often paints a different picture than what we see in front of our eyes, doesn't it? And don't you remember what God said in Psalm chapter one? Blessed is the man who walks not according to the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord. And on his law, he meditates day and night.

In all that he does, it says he prospers. And yet, what do we see with our eyes? It's the wicked who seem to be blessed. It's the wicked who seem to prosper. It's the wicked who have the money and the comfort and the luxury.

[15 : 05] And it's the wicked who get ahead while the righteous fall behind. Everything seems to be upside down. It's frustrating. It's frustrating. And to play by the rules and yet to constantly feel like you're falling behind.

Church, look how David calls us to respond here in verse one. He says, fret not yourself because of evildoers. Be not envious of wrongdoers.

Fret not yourself because of evildoers. He says in verse seven, fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices.

He says in verse eight, fret not yourself. It tends only to evil. This word fret, it essentially means anger not. Don't get yourself so angry and so anxious and so agitated, so bothered over the wicked and their success.

Don't fixate on it so that you get so hot under the collar and bothered by it. The Christian standard Bible translates it, don't be agitated by the evildoers.

[16 : 21] Church, when you see the injustice done to our brothers and sisters throughout the world, do you fret? Or do you envy their success?

And when you jump onto social media and you see the luxurious life of a non-believer, are you tempted to envy? When you see a clip like what I saw this week of Tom Brady sailing down the river on his \$12 million yacht, right, not a care in the world, are you ever prone to think, man, that would be nice to have what he has?

David says, be not envious of wrongdoers. But church, how in the world is that type of response possible?

How in the world is that even possible? How can we look on at the success of the wicked here and not get upset? And how can we look at what they have and not be envious and wish that that were us and not them?

Well, David tells us, second, he says, fix your eyes on our promised future. Fix your eyes on our promised future.

[17 : 34] I know that it is frustrating to play a losing game. I am more competitive than most. I promise you. I guarantee you, I'm more competitive than you. How would you feel, though, if you knew that in the end, church, that you won and the wicked lose?

How would it change things for you to know with certainty that the end of the game has already been decided? That whatever twists and turns life takes you here and now, it does not ultimately matter because soon and very soon the game will be over and you will have won.

How would it change things for you to know that the success of the wicked is short-lived and momentary?

Your suffering, the suffering of the righteous is also short-lived and momentary. Christian, don't you realize this is the advantage that we have here and now?

This ought to radically transform the way we go through our life. We don't know when this will happen, but we know with certainty because the Lord has told us what will happen soon and very soon.

[18 : 49] The Lord Jesus will return and He will make all things right. We've seen that there are two very different groups of people in the world, but here, David points us to now the radically different future for these two groups of people.

The radically different future for the wicked and for the righteous. Let's think first about the future of the wicked. David says that the wicked person who lives this luxurious life here and now, verse 2, he says, they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.

Church, right now, the wicked are watered and fed and nourished by the common grace blessings of the Lord. But what happens when those common grace blessings are removed and all that's left is the scorching heat of God's wrath against the wicked?

He says that wicked person who lives in open rebellion against the Lord and seems to get away with it here and now, who seems to have it all together, who seems to have no worries in this life, verse 20, says like smoke, they vanish away.

Just like that. The wicked seem like they're rooted and stable now, like nothing can shake them. But David says in verse 35, I have seen the wicked, ruthless man spreading himself like a green laurel tree, rooted and stable and strong and secure.

[20 : 24] And yet, what does he say? They passed away. And behold, he was no more. Though I sought him, he could not be found. And we should remember that the appearance of stability and security and success that the wicked have here and now, it is all momentary and fading in light of eternity.

It simply will not last. In fact, you ask, where is God in all of this? David tells us the Lord is not absent.

He's not ambivalent. He's not indifferent. He's not ignorant of what's happening in his world. Rather, verse 13, it says, while the wicked plot against the righteous, the Lord laughs at the wicked.

Why? For he sees that his day is coming. Yes, everything is upside down right now. But again, church, one day soon, our God will come and make it right.

we confess this in our statement of faith and what we profess to believe together as a church. We say, we believe that the end of the world is quickly approaching, that at the last day, Christ will descend from heaven in glory and raise the dead, both righteous and the wicked, from the grave to final judgment.

[21 : 52] A solemn separation will then take place, which will fix forever the final state of men on principles of righteousness. The wicked will be adjudged to endless conscious punishment in hell.

Those belonging to Christ will have eternal life in the new heavens and the new earth and will dwell forever with God in righteousness, peace, and joy to the glory of God.

These are sobering words, aren't they, church? It is not fun and it is not popular to talk about the reality of hell. In fact, several popular Bible teachers, public figures, have recently come out denying the reality of a true, eternal place of torment for the wicked.

The truth is unpopular, but friend, we're not wiser than God. Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 1.9, they, the wicked, will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and away from the glory of His might.

Jesus Himself tells us in Matthew 25, 46, and these, the wicked, will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

[23:07] Do you see the radically different destination here between these radically different groups of people? The righteous will look to the place where the wicked stood, harassing God's people, living in common grace blessings while denying the God who made them, and in that day they will be no more.

Ask yourself, why would I envy that person? Why would I want what they have? Why would I fret over their success here and now?

It's going to be gone like that, like smoke in the air. It'll vanish. It'll go away like in an instant. Why would I envy that person? Church, we shouldn't envy them and we shouldn't fret over them.

You know our response? It should be we should have compassion on them. We should long for them to come to know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ as we have.

We should pray for them that the Lord would be gracious to them as He's been to us. We should pursue them with the gospel of Christ. We should call them to repentance and to faith in Jesus.

[24:15] But we should never, ever, envy them. If we're prone to fret or envy the wicked, we should know that our frustration here and now, it often stems from a lack of eternal perspective.

That's the future for the wicked. Look, look at what David says about the future for the righteous. Five times here in Psalm 37, five times, David assures us the righteous will inherit the land.

Did you hear that promise repeated? Verse 9, the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land. Verse 11, the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace.

Verse 22, those blessed by the Lord shall inherit the land, but those cursed by Him shall be cut off. Verse 29, the righteous shall inherit the land and dwell upon it forever.

Verse 34, wait for the Lord and keep His way and He will exalt you to inherit the land. You will look on when the wicked are cut off. David holds out this hope for God's people.

[25:26] He assures his people, yes, it may look bleak now, but the righteous look ahead to God's promises. The righteous remember, God has promised this time and this place when you will be with me in the land.

This land promise we know for Israel, that's much more than just a piece of property. This was the hope of God's people. This was their hope. This was a place like a new Eden.

It was a place where God's people would again dwell with God, where He would be their God and they would be His people, where they would worship Him together, where they would have peace from their enemies.

David says, the wicked will not be there, but the righteous and the meek will inherit the land. But church, of course, we know this land promise is ultimately fulfilled in the new Eden to come, the new heavens and the new earth and not just a patch of land in the Middle East, but all the world renewed and restored for all of God's people.

This is our hope in Christ. A place in a day where there is no sin, where the wicked are no more, where all of God's people can dwell with Him forever, where He will be our God and we will be His people.

[26:55] This is what John saw in Revelation 21. He says, I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more.

And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

He will dwell with them and they will be His people and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more.

neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away. Church, this is our future in Christ.

Can't you endure a little suffering here to know that that day is coming soon? Friend, if you are still amongst the wicked, if you have not yet put your faith in Christ, the call here is clear.

[28:09] The response of this passage for the wicked is turn from your sin and put your faith in Christ and you too will have this confident future ahead of you. And the response of the righteous is to respond here and now until that day with patient faithfulness.

this is what we see in our third and final point this morning. Third, in light of all of this, in light of this glorious promise that we have ahead of us, third, we are called to patient faithfulness here and now. Again, if you knew that at the end of this game, while the cheater sat and counted up his money, at some point, dad is going to come, he's going to take away everything that he's gained, he's going to hand it to you, he's going to pick up your little car, he's going to bring it all the way safely to the finish line, he's going to declare you the winner and him the loser, how would that transform the way you go through life?

You could play this game with a smile, knowing that no matter what happens, the end is secure.

Our promised future ought to produce present faithfulness despite our present frustration.

David calls us to several practical responses here in this psalm. It is so full of imperatives and commands for us, directing us what to do.

[29:38] I just want to group them. I want us to think in five categories here as we close by way of response. The first, protect your heart. Protect your heart.

In other words, do not join them in their game. when you see the success of the wicked Christian, do not fret, do not envy, he says in verse 1.

Do not be wrathful, do not be angry, he says in verse 8. Do not be tempted to join in with them, and they're evil, he says in verse 27. You're going to feel tempted from time to time to wish that you had what they have.

Right? But remember the promise, church. Remember what lies ahead of you. Remember that this present moment will be over before you know it, and so protect your heart from envy.

The second, put your trust entirely in the Lord. Put your trust entirely in the Lord. Fix your eyes on our great and sovereign God.

[30:46] And remember who is in charge of this world even when things look bleak. So David says, trust in the Lord. Verse three, do you trust him? Do you trust him to do what's right?

Do you trust him that he's in control? Do you trust him to bring justice in the end? Delight yourself in the Lord. Verse four, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the Lord. Trust him and he will act. You know, the wicked take this as a prosperity promise. If I just delight in him enough, I'll get whatever I want, right?

But the righteous know better. We know that the Lord himself is the greatest treasure in all the world, far better than riches, far better than luxury, far better than momentary success.

We know Psalm 16:11 in his presence there is fullness of joy. At his right hand are pleasures forever more. So the call to God's people here and now, delight yourself in him.

[31:54] Trust in him. Commit yourself to him and one day soon he will bring you into the land to be with him forever. Do you delight in him?

Third category, David calls us to pursue what is good. Pursue what is good. One of the common mistakes that we can easily walk into because we know what the future holds is that might lead us to passivity.

We know what's going to happen anyway. God is going to come. He's going to set things right. We'll be with him soon. Why not just sit back on our hands and wait? I love that David no believer do good.

Verse 3 Dwell in the land. Befriend faithfulness. Lend generously and give. He says verse 21 Utter wisdom. Speak justice.

He says verse 30 In other words, Christian, we are called to be active in pursuing good here and now while we wait for the Lord to come.

[33:05] We don't just sit back on our hands and do nothing. We pursue good. We love our neighbor as ourselves. We put our hands and our feet and our mouths to the pursuit of righteousness.

The certain future that we have ahead of us ought to produce in us a radical commitment to live for the glory of God and the good of our neighbor here and now.

Are we doing this, church? Does your future hope shape the way you speak? Does your future hope shape the way you think about money?

Does your future hope shape the way you think about the way that you live? Pursue good. Fourth category David calls us practice patient endurance.

Practice patient endurance. Here's a difficult one. Be still he says verse 7. Be still before the Lord.

[34 : 11] Wait patiently for him. Wait for the Lord and keep his way he says in verse 34. Don't feel a need to act on every impulse to right every wrong and take every matter into your own hands.

Rather he calls us verse 11 be meek. Would you describe yourself as meek? Would others describe you as meek?

The kingdom of God does not belong to those who are strong and prideful and can take care of every problem that comes their way in their own strength. Rather what does verse 11 teach us?

The meek shall inherit the land. And don't you know again Jesus quotes this verse in the sermon on the mount. We read it this morning. Again transforming this for us so that we see this promise is not just the land.

Rather what does he say? the meek shall inherit the earth. Are you meek? Fifth and final category David says Christian pay attention to the righteous.

[35 : 23] Pay attention to the righteous. David reflects back as an old man in verse 25. He looks out and he says I have been young and now I'm old yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread and so verse 37 he says mark the blameless and behold the upright mark the blameless and behold the upright we have a choice what we pay attention to don't we we have a choice what we set our eyes on and the temptation is to pay attention to this successful wicked man but haven't we seen this lens only to frustration the world lifts up and pays attention to the successful wicked man instead Christian we're called to pay attention and learn from those whose life although it may lack the flash and the glamour and all the things that the world deems worthy of attention their life is marked by steady faithfulness to the

Lord their life is marked by meekness do you have anyone like that in your life I think it would be to our benefit if each and every one of us took our eyes off of the temporary success of the wicked and instead fixed our eyes on the eternal promises to the meek and the righteous and friend no one has embodied this more than King Jesus King David experienced the frustration that we often feel struggling in righteousness while the wicked seemed to succeed but church nobody knew this more intimately than King Jesus Jesus Christ is the righteous man who was hunted and hated by the wicked who was truly blameless and upright who never once envied the wicked who never once fretted over their success who completely and totally entrusted himself to

God and yet in the most unfair moment in human history this righteous man suffered and died a sinner's death it was against Jesus ultimately that the wicked gnashed their teeth and bent their bows and for a brief moment on the cross it looked as if wickedness had won the day but church as we fix our eyes on Christ we look back at the cross we see in the great wisdom of our God even this greatest moment of wickedness the world has ever seen was his eternal plan for good this meek and lowly king crucified for us crushed the powers of sin and death and now by right rules and reigns over all of heaven and earth and promises us that those who are righteous by faith in him one day soon will reign with him for all eternity can you bear a little suffering

Christian can you bear a little unfairness for a moment Christian if you are discouraged or frustrated by the apparent success of the wicked here and now if you are are frustrated by your struggles fix your eyes on Christ mark the blameless behold the upright delight yourself in him trust in him wait on him commit yourself to him you are following him first through suffering but then into glory this light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen father we pray god that you would give us this perspective when we are frustrated by the success of the wicked when we look out and see our brothers and sisters harassed for professing christ when we're prone to despair in our suffering here and now god would you remind us of what christ has done for us and what christ has yet to do for us lord that he has endured all sorts of suffering on our behalf and he will come again to put an end to all suffering when he returns lord we pray all of this in jesus name amen