

Psalms

Week 6: Trusting God Amid Injustice -- Psalm 37

It is one of the oldest griefs of the faithful, and it can curdle into bitterness faster than almost anything else: the people who cut every corner seem to come out ahead. The dishonest competitor wins the contract. The ruthless climber gets the promotion. The person who lies, cheats, and steps on others appears to sail through life while you, trying to do the right thing, struggle and wait. You watch it happen, and a small voice asks whether honesty is worth it, whether God is paying attention, whether the whole moral universe is rigged in favor of the people willing to play dirty.

Psalm 37 was written by an old man who had seen all of this and lived long enough to know how the story ends. “I have been young, and now am old,” David says near the close, “yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken.” He is not naive. He has watched the wicked flourish. But he has also watched them fade, and from that long vantage point he writes a psalm to a younger generation tempted to envy them. Three times in the opening verses he says it plainly: “Fret not.” Do not let the apparent success of evildoers eat you alive.

What he offers instead is not a clenched jaw and a stiff upper lip but a set of deliberate, trusting actions. Trust in the Lord. Delight yourself in Him. Commit your way to Him. Be still before Him and wait patiently. The psalm keeps returning to the long view: the wicked are like grass that is green in the morning and withered by evening, like smoke that vanishes, while those who wait on the Lord will not finally be put to shame. The question the psalm forces is simply this: are you willing to believe that God’s timeline, not the evening news, tells the true story?

This week we learn to live in the gap, the painful space between the way things are and the way things should be, without letting that gap poison us. We will look honestly at the prosperity of the wicked, and we will let the New Testament tell us how the account finally settles. Read Psalm 37 slowly. If you have been simmering with resentment over an injustice you cannot fix, let this old shepherd, who saw it all, teach your heart to rest.

Group Discussion: Three times in the opening verses David says, “Fret not yourself because of evildoers” who seem to prosper (vv. 1, 7, 8). Yet fretting over the success of the unscrupulous is exactly what most of us do. Why is the apparent prosperity of the wicked so corrosive to our own faith, and what does our fretting reveal about what we secretly believe about God and about the good life?

Personal Reflection: David calls us to “trust,” “delight,” “commit,” and “be still” before the Lord rather than stew over those who get ahead by doing wrong (vv. 3–7). Is there a specific injustice, at work, in your family, in the wider world, that you have been fretting over? What would it look like this week to commit that situation to God instead of carrying it yourself?

Study Questions

1. The psalm opens, “Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb” (vv. 1–2). Why does David ground his command not to fret in the short-lived nature of the wicked, and what does it teach us about taking the long view of God rather than the short view of present appearances?
2. Envy of wrongdoers is the very thing David warns against (v. 1). Be honest: whose success or ease have you found yourself envying lately, even though you would not want their character or their choices? What does that envy expose about your own definition of a good life?
3. David gives a series of commands: “Trust in the Lord... delight yourself in the Lord... commit your way to the Lord... be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him” (vv. 3–7). How do these four actions work together as God’s alternative to fretting, and why is trusting God an active discipline rather than a passive feeling?
4. To “commit your way to the Lord” (v. 5) means to roll the whole burden of a situation onto Him and leave it there. What is the situation you keep picking back up after you have prayed about it, taking the worry back into your own hands? What makes it so hard to leave it with God?
5. David repeats a striking promise: “those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land” and “the meek shall inherit the land” (vv. 9, 11). Jesus echoes this in the Beatitudes: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” What does this inheritance actually refer to for the people of God, and why should we not read it as the promise of an earthly political kingdom or material reward?
6. The psalm commends the meek, those who entrust their cause to God rather than grasping and pushing for their own advantage (v. 11). In a culture that rewards self-promotion, where are you most tempted to grasp and push rather than trust God with your future? What would meekness look like in that specific area?
7. David contrasts the destinies: “the wicked will perish... they vanish, like smoke they vanish away,” while “the righteous is generous and gives... the steps of a man are established by the Lord” (vv. 20–23). How does this psalm’s teaching about the final end of the wicked and the righteous prepare us for the fuller New Testament revelation of judgment and reward, and why does the final accounting matter for how we live now?
8. David promises that the Lord upholds the righteous when they stumble: “though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand” (vv. 23–24). When you have stumbled, have you experienced God upholding you, or have you assumed He had given up on you? How does this promise change the way you handle your own failures?
9. Near the end David testifies, “I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread” (v. 25), and, “the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble” (v. 39). How does

the whole psalm teach us to trust God's justice and timing when life seems unfair, and how does the cross and resurrection of Christ assure us that final justice and final reward are secure in Him?

10. Look back across the whole psalm, from "fret not" to the quiet confidence that God will never forsake the righteous. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through it. What is the single truth from Psalm 37 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Matthew 5:5, the meek inheriting the earth in the teaching of Jesus; Psalm 73:16–28, the end of the wicked seen clearly from the sanctuary; Romans 12:17–21, leaving vengeance to God and overcoming evil with good; 2 Peter 3:8–13, the patience of God and the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells; Revelation 21:1–7, the inheritance God prepares for those who endure.