

The Righteous and the Wicked Psalm 37

by Pastor Roy Hogan

PART I verses 1-11

The first 11 verses are written from the view of the righteous man; that is, how a righteous man would view this great problem of the wicked prospering and the righteous facing hardship.

37:1-2

Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. 2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

The word *fret* occurs seven times in the Bible. It always has the meaning “to blaze” or “to get hot.” In other words, to get bent out of shape or to become disgusted and bothered. The righteous are admonished to fret not because of the life and actions of evildoers. This is an instruction from God. Yet, it is not so easy to comply. If a man harms me, and I watch him prosper thereafter, it is not so easy to not be bothered by his prosperity. My human flesh wishes every person who has wronged me would be punished immediately. This view is not God’s view. He instructs the good man who is harmed to not let it bother him. Pay the matter no mind. This is difficult to do.

Those who harm a good man often drive better cars than the man they harmed. The evildoers often live in better houses than the man they harmed. How can the harmed man not be bothered? Verse 2 gives us the consolation that the evil man’s day WILL come. It may appear he has gotten by, but soon God will cut them down like grass. God is in charge of mowing; not you or me. They will eventually, at the hand of God, wither like a green herb. God has weed killer man knows nothing of.

Soon, to God, is not the same *soon* we view. Remember, he is an eternal God, and to him, a day is as a thousand years. I want the

evildoer to be punished before sundown. However, men work in days according to a calendar. God works in “due seasons.” It is not my responsibility to avenge the works of evil.

37:3

Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

David, being a fugitive for years, could certainly relate to the promises of these two verses. David had dwelt in caves, the forest, and in the wilderness. Yet, he had never missed a meal. The enemy’s arrows seemed always to miss. Now, Saul is dead, and David was sitting in Saul’s seat as king of Israel. How did this happen? It happened because David *trusted* in the Lord, and he did *good*. What a simple recipe for victory over our enemies! I personally do not know of even one child of God who has died of starvation.

37:4

Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

This is an abused verse in God’s Word. I do not know if this verse is the most misapplied verse in the Bible or if it is Philippians 4:13 *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

The failure in misapplying this verse comes from overlooking the first part of the verse. The first part of the verse, *delight thyself also in the Lord*, give the requirements for reaping the benefit of the last portion of the verse. We must delight ourselves in the Lord to receive our heart’s desires. *Delight* means to “make merry over.” A grandparent delights in grandchildren. What does God mean to you? Are you merry in your heart over Jesus? Many live a sad life because there is no praise in their heart toward God. If your want a heart’s desire to be met, try bragging on Jesus. Try getting crazy about him like folk are crazy about sports and recreation. Our care toward God limits our benefits from him.

Notice the words of the verse carefully, particularly the words *desires of the heart*. The promise of the verse does not apply to desires of flesh or the mind. The best things in my life I never asked God for. For some reason, this sort of blows my mind. I never prayed for them. I never opened my mouth to God about them. I can testify that the promise of this verse is real. Fall in love with the LORD, and no telling what may come your way.

37:5-6

Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. 6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

Commit means “to roll over.” Are you burdened? Are you stressed? Are you depressed? Take that burden, that stress, and that care that is killing you, and *roll it over* to the LORD. His shoulders are bigger than yours or mine. He measured the sea in the palm of his hand. He hanged the heavens as one would hang a curtain. I recall the song we sing occasionally that says, in part, “take your burdens to the Lord and leave them there.” Don’t roll them back away for God and take them back with you.

Bring to pass means *to work it out*. You may not see the result immediately. God may not solve the problem in the manner you expected. There comes a time in every child of God’s like where they must resolve to let god be God.

Thy righteousness can be made to shine as a light. Thy judgment will come forth as the noonday. Again, notice there is a requirement. Live your life as you please and God owes you nothing. If you will live righteously with your way committed to the Lord, God will move in regard to your request. Your judgment, which has the meaning of a judge pronouncing a verdict to award, shall be bright as the 12 o’clock sun. Nothing can brighten a day like God lifting a burden.

37:7-8

Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. 8 Cease from anger; and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.

Such great advice from the Word of God. Fret means to “get hot” or “to blaze”. Sometimes I tend to get “on fire” because of the billion-dollar industry pornography has become. It is easy to get hot regarding what the drug dealer is doing to our youth. Many poor saints are scrapping to get by, and the wicked man is living a seemingly prosperous life.

Dear God, what is the problem and why is this? What are we to do? Don't get hot. This wicked world will rob you of all your Christian joy if you focus on them. You cannot fret over the prosperity of the wicked and have any joy or peace in your life. I hate sin, but I love the Savior more than I hate sin. Else, I would lose my mind over the prosperity of the wicked.

What can the righteous do? There is no solution in the Bible, no instruction, and no guidance given to the righteous on how to rid the world of wickedness. I wish there was a button we could push to rid the world of sin. However, we must resolve that the wicked and wickedness is in the hands of almighty God.

Verse 8 cautions the righteous not to take matters in their own hands. Romans 2:17 **Recompense** to no man evil for evil. *Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

37:9-10

For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. 10 For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.

How good it will be with all sin and sinners are eradicated from the face of the earth. That day is promised multiple times in the Word of God. They will be gone and the place they inhabited shall be sanitized and given to God's people. Sin is overwhelmingly dominant on this earth today. Sin is 6,000-years-old. After 6,000 years, sin thinks it owns the earth. There is no place where it is not abundant. Sin has inherited the earth.

Verse 10 gives us the promise that in *a little while*, that will change. Even so come Lord Jesus. How do folk who deny the millennium explain this verse? I want to stand one day in Athens Tennessee and behold the place where the jail once stood. I want to behold the place where the hospital once stood. The saloon will be gone.

37:11

But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

From sea-to-sea and from shore-to-shore, the earth will be the domain of the righteous. To inherit means to take ownership. To own allows one to inhabit.

PART II verses 12-22

37:12

The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.

Think back in history to all the wars that have taken place, not only in America, but throughout the world. Some wars have lasted for decades. While preaching in Malawi, I went over the border into the neighboring country of Mozambique. Between Malawi and Mozambique there is a very large lake called Lake Malawi. I was told by the natives that war was fought between Malawi and Mozambique for some seventeen years over the rights to this lake.

It may still be ongoing. Wars have been fought over land, over race, and over control and frivolous reasons.

The bloodiest war in American history was the Civil War. Some 620,000 of our forefathers and mothers were killed in this war. The greatest loss of life recorded by war happened in World War II. Fifty-million military and citizens lost their life. Yet, the greatest war in the history of mankind is the war of the wicked against the just. This is also the oldest war, being some 6,000-years-old. The wicked, simply put, “have it in for” the just. This is stated clearly in verse 12.

As you read this paragraph, which will take only seconds, it is beyond the mind of any man to know what the wicked are plotting against the just. Have you ever seen the wicked assault the just as we presently see it in America? All one has to do to be hated is to abide lawfully by the commands of God. Walk uprightly and someone will try to knock you down. I was taught by my parents, and the saints in my life, to help people. I trust I have never hurt one of God’s created. I have disappointed many I know. It is in my heart, since the day I was saved, to not hurt people. If you are hungry, I will feed you. If you need a ride, call me. Yet, I have enemies. The human mind cannot explain this, only God’s Word can.

Lions are meat-eaters. The power that lieth in the jaws of a lion defy reality. Such are the jaws of the wicked. The wicked are meat-eaters seeking to devour the saints.

37:13

The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming.

An old saying says “every dog has its day in the sun.” Matthew 7:2 *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.* In the book of Esther, we find *wicked* Haman positioned on the gallows he had constructed for *just* Mordecai.

37:14-15

The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. 15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

Not only are the just persecuted, the poor and needy are mentioned as being attacked in verse 14. Why would anyone want to pick on a poor man? The wicked take the meal from the barrel of the needy widow. Why not leave the poor and needy alone? Let the wicked steal from and mistreat the well-to-do? Are you thankful for the Bible? The Bible gives explanations to life that are found nowhere else.

Hitler murdered six-million Jews, many of them poor and underprivileged. Helpless women and innocent children died at his wicked hand. Wonder how Hitler feels now in hell? He must know by now that his bow is broken and his sword is twisting in his heart.

37:16

A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. 17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.

Observing the affairs of life, one may be inclined to think money makes men and women mean. It is human to think if a person has all they need and more they will be happy and content. This is not true. Few rich people are content. The misery of money often drives the wealthy to strong drink, drugs, occult deeds, and even murder. A poor man is prone to think "if I had the riches of that man, I would be happy." Be not deceived, few wealthy people seem happy. One of the most miserable persons in the Bible was King Saul. In this life, very few righteous men get ahead. That is not a problem, according to verse 16, but a blessing. I may never

have preached the Gospel if I had riches. I may not have come to Christ as savior if I had been well-off in this life.

The Word of God makes it clear that it is better to be righteous and have little than to be unjust and rich. Amen to the Word of God. A rich man lying in his empty coffin with his wealth in the bank has broken arms. He cannot go online and check his balance. He cannot hand another deposit to the teller nor reach for another hefty withdrawal.

37:18-20

The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever. 19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. 20 But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.

Verse 18 assures the person who walks with God that their best days are ahead. From hell, the rich man cannot reach his wallet. In Luke chapter 16, the rich man requested a just man come to hell and visit him. Where was his butler? Where was his head servant? The rich man was bankrupt. Every person in hell is bankrupt. It is my belief that every person in hell is calling on someone by name to come to their rescue. It may be the little country preacher who passed by with the Gospel and was not allowed inside the gate. It may be the Godly school teacher who led the class in prayer. It may be the radio who preacher who annoyed the rich man when the sound of his voice was heard on his radio speaker.

The moment a saved soul takes that last breath, riches untold appear. Riches unimaginable unfold before he eyes of the saint. That fine home they could only dream about is now a reality. If you are born again, the best is yet to come.

Until death do us part, verse 19 assures the less fortunate that regardless of the hardness of the day, their needs shall be met. Even in famine, they shall be satisfied. Not so for the wicked.

Verse 20. The fat of lambs was used as oil for lamps. The fat burned to give light. The fat, in being burned, became smoke. The day will come when the wicked by be as futile as the smoke of a fire.

37:21

The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth. 22 For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.

I despise a crook, a person who with a deceptive face of honesty, who looks you in the eye to borrow money with a pledge to repay it and never intends to. I believe a goodly number of wealthy people stole some of what they had. It is possible it was borrowed from a poor man and never repaid. Madoff bilked investors out of 50 billion dollars. Jim Jones enjoyed riches for a short while as he preyed on poor people even asking them to sell their homes and impart the proceeds into his custody. Why do we wonder why God made hell?

PART III verse 23-40

Ps 37:23-24

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. 24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

We begin this part 3 study with a very familiar verse of Scripture in verse 23. I believe saved persons should desire to be *good*. *Wicked* men desire to be bad. God's children desire to be good.

What constitutes a good man? There are preachers, teachers, evangelists, missionaries and other titles in the Christian vineyard. Then, there is the good man. Perhaps the highest title any man could have is to be called by God "a good man." The Bible tells us in Matthew 19:17 there is none good but one, that is, God. Yet, here in verse 23 and 24, we find a good man. Who is good? A good

man is one who walks under the direction of God. His steps align with the ways of God. Wherever God bids him to go, he goes. A good man not preach or teach or even sing, but he allows God to order his steps. A good man is a sheep. Wherever the shepherd leads, he follows. Are you a sheep or a goat?

A good man following God walks in a delightful spirit. He is not sad or mad. He does not feel deprived or belittled because he cannot do what the world does or go where the world goes. He is happy letting God “boss him around.” To follow the direction of God is strange to this generation of believers. This generation is a bunch of free-spirited rebels that are not going to allow God to tell them what to do. If this generation needs leadership, they search the internet or read a book. There are few good men walking on the earth today.

Life is not without problems for the good man. Verse 24 explains that even a good man can fall, but the fall is not the end. There is no man not subject to a fall at some time in life. A good man has the assurance that no fall can end his journey. He may be bruised and hurting, but God will get him up. No fall can cause his destruction.

37:25

I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

This is one of the many comforting verses in the Word of God for the believer. God is a gracious provider. God provided for David when he was a shepherd-boy on the hills of Judea. He provided for David in those many months in which he roamed the countryside living the life of a fugitive running from angry King Saul. He fed David as he sat on the throne as King of Israel. God fed him as a lad. God fed him as a teenager. God fed him as a man.

In 1445 B.C., several million people left the bondage of Egypt and walked into a wilderness free people. There were no stores in the

wilderness. There were no restaurants. The land was too poor to grow fruits and vegetables. The trip across the wilderness lasted 40 years. Finally, the people crossed Jordan into Canaan. Looking back over the wilderness, they saw not one single grave containing the body of someone who died from starvation. Oh yes, there were thousands of graves, but not one grave contained a soul who had perished from starvation.

Manna fell in the wilderness. Manna still falls today. Meal barrels are still made to contain meal, even in time of famine. God's people do not have to beg and bum for the provisions of life. If the Devil could, he would starve the righteous. I have attended many funerals in my lifetime. Probably 99% were funerals of saved folk. Some died of disease such as cancer. Some died of natural causes. Some were taken from life by an accident. **None** died of starvation. Manna still falls today. Bless the name of the Lord. As a son of God, I cannot be forsaken by my father God, nor can I starve. Come to think of it, I have never been hungry. God can turn stones to bread if there is a need to do so.

David outlived the Devil, Saul, that had tormented him. Bless the name of the great God of provisions.

37:26

He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.

A good man is *merciful*. This is a merciless age. If I and mine are okay, let others get by the best way they can. This is the attitude of society in the 21st century. This is, however, not the attitude of *good* men and women. Good men and women are *merciful*. They walk about attentive to the needs of others. Likely, on your street, someone has a need. I once knew a *good* man. I would visit his home often. I never left his home without something in my hand that he had given me. He walked in church and surveyed the congregation. Time and again, I saw him give money to folk in the congregation. God revealed to him the needs of others. He was a merciful man.

A good man *lendeth*. This is an interesting word to find in the Bible. We surely know the meaning of *lendeth* for we *borroweth* sometimes. Have you ever asked someone to grant you a loan? Who are we lending to in verse 26? *Good* men lend to those in need. When you pray in the morning before you leave your home for your daily routine, try asking God to put someone in your path that has a need that you can help. At the time of this writing, there are more than 7 billion people on earth. Likely, someone on your street or beside you in the factory needs help.

Loans require repayment. However, this loan in verse 16 is different. When a good man gives a loan to someone in need, the needy do not repay to loan. God is the financial officer. He repays to loan with interest, not to the lender but to the children, the seed, of the lender. Do you want your children to be blessed? I believe the answer is yes. Well then, help people in need. The repayment, plus interest goes to your seed, that is, your heirs! I stand before you today with every need in my life and my wife's life met. This is because my father was a good man who was merciful to the needy.

God has allowed me to meet some of the stingiest, greedy people on this planet. I have met them in church. I am sad to say this. However, it has taught me so much being around greedy, stingy people. It has made me to literally hate money, houses and land. Thank you, God, for putting such people in my life.

Psalm 112:5 *A good man showeth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.*

37:27-28

Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. 28 For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

Good men do good. Good men receive eternal life. Hell-raisers are not going to Heaven. There will be no thieves, liars, or drunkards in Heaven. One cannot walk toward hell and arrive in heaven. Most every drug dealer, murderer, thief, and liar in this city claim to be Christians.

There is an interesting truth in verse 28: *For the LORD loveth judgment.* God loves the poor. God loves the sinners. God loves the saints. God loves little babies, but God loves judgment? I did not know this until I read this verse. All I have to say is “the wicked are in deep trouble.”

37:29

The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.

I tend to dwell on the word *inherit*. This word tells me I will someday own the land. It will be mine. If you own property, you can do with it as you please. Someday soon, the devil can take a hike. He can get off my land! I only wish God would graciously grant me the privilege to evict the devil. However, I realize this is his charge.

37:30-31

The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. 31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

Life has slippery slopes. There are dangerous ledges and cliffs on the path of life. One small slip, and you are a goner. The doctor calls and ask you to come in for consultation regarding the results of your tests. You have hit a slippery slope. The car dies and the repair bill may be awful. Who carries around an extra \$3000.00 to replace a transmission? You are on a slippery slope. God assures the righteous that, thanks to the good Lord, our shoes have cleats in

the sole. Bless the name of Jehovah God. Life is not a walk in a rose garden for the redeemed. Life has steep slopes, but the path the righteous leads to a good place.

37:32-34

The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. 33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. 34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.

The wicked watch you as a child of God. Never forget that. They set traps to catch you. They even desire that you die. Wicked Saul had his sights set on slaying righteous David. Verse 33 assures the righteous that though a good man may find himself in the very hand of the ungodly, God stands ready to pry his grubby hands open and deliver his child.

Verse 34 sums up eternity for all men. The righteous shall inherit the land. The wicked shall be judged by holy God and cast into the pit of destruction. I thank God that I know, based on the Word of God, how this thing called life ends.

37:35-36

I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. 36 Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

The wicked are depicted, in verse 35, as being like a *green bay tree*. The bay tree is bright in color. The wicked are colorful. Look at all their billboards advertising their goods with beautiful woman, handsome men, and fine cars.

The bay tree is very large, spreading forth as a landmark. Such are the ways of the wicked. The wicked have more in this life than do the righteous. Their houses are larger. Their cars are bigger. Their bank accounts are enormous. Their stadiums are larger than our churches.

We studied about God's lawnmower and his herbicide in verse 2 of this 37th Psalm. Now we come to his chainsaw. The chain is sharp. The bar is well-oiled. It cranks on the first pull. The bar is two-millions miles long. Oh, and by the way, he owns a stump-grinder. When he is finished, you can't tell he has been on the property. Such is the destiny of the wicked. Are you glad you are saved?

37:37-40

Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. 38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. 39 But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble. 40 And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

These four verses give a beautiful summary to this fabulous 37th chapter of the Psalm. I do not know what tomorrow holds. Men struggle to forecast tomorrow's weather. Yet, through the Word of God, we can know who the end of this life. It is written- the righteous win and the wicked lose.