

**“When Life Seems Unfair” Scripture text: Psalm 37**  
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**Before reading text:**

This morning we're looking at Psalm 37. It's classified in various ways, either as a wisdom psalm, or a teaching, instructional psalm. Among others of this genre, would be Psalm 1. Many of us know Psalm 1....it starts with the word "blessed," blessed is the man, the person "who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked...but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on that law he meditates day and night."

One main characteristic of a wisdom psalm is that it often contrasts the righteous and the wicked.

-These wisdom psalms often sound like the Proverbs...in fact many of the words and phrases and thoughts are echoed in various proverbs. Ps 37:1, for example, is found, almost word-for-word, in a proverb.

A unique characteristic of Ps 37 is the use of the Hebrew alphabet.

So you can see a line break in our English translation, about every 2 verses.

Each verse of the original Hebrew poem, begins with a word which starts with the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet. So, vs. 1...."do not fret 烦恼" begins with the Hebrew letter A. Vs. 3, begins with their letter B, "trust"...continues with verse 4.

Then, their third letter, starting with our verse 5.

Psalm 37 is quite long. Obviously with a longer psalm, in one sermon we cannot consider everything it says...but we will focus on some of its main points. Notice, that with additional study on this psalm

**1. Let's start by considering those the psalmist calls the "evildoers" or "those workers of iniquity."**

[Read vs. 1. Evil men, those who do wrong. In later verses they are called "the wicked."

If you read this verse, or this Psalm all by itself, you could wrongly conclude this:

It would seem the psalm is saying in this world there is one group of people basically doing what is good and right, and another group of people who are doing what is wrong and wicked. And that as long as you avoid wrong and wicked things, and try to do right and good things, then God will love you. And that He will bless you. And someday, God will take you to heaven.

But we've noted before, that is not the teaching of the Bible. Nor of Psalm 37. That is mere

moralism 道德主义. And none of us, Christian or non-Christian, can ever become moral enough to win God's love, not in this life, nor the next life. Nor can any of us become good enough to deserve heaven, when we die. Yes, morality is something good for society in general.

But, please listen carefully: Without Jesus, both moral people and immoral people are lost.

-Who are the wicked, the un-righteous, the sinners? Well, go back to Abraham, and that covenant God made with him. Did God choose Abraham because he was showing himself to be so good, so moral, when he lived in Ur of the Chaldeans? No! The Bible tells us that Abram and his parents worshipped idols in those early years. / **But even while he was an idolater, a wicked man, God decided to chose Abraham.** Out of God's own undeserved grace and mercy.

In Genesis 15:6 we read these very important words that Paul quotes in Romans 4. Quote:

"Abraham believed God—trusted in God's promise—and God credited it as righteousness."

By the instrument of trusting, putting faith in God and His promises, God credited Abraham

with God's own, perfect righteousness. Paul goes on to say in Romans 4 that by faith Abraham was looking forward to Jesus and Jesus righteousness. On the basis of J' imputed righteousness, God did not hold Abraham's past, present, or future sins against him, to condemn him. Instead, God forgave Abraham all his sin. Because of Jesus.

So the evil men, the wrong doers, referred to in vs. 1, are those, first of all, who have **not been credited** with the righteousness of God in Jesus. They do not trust in God's promise to save them in Jesus. Therefore have no imputed righteousness. They have only their own unrighteousness, their own, natural wickedness.

And all of us have that unrighteousness, that wickedness, by nature, as we enter this world./

-Now, those without trust in God, without imputed righteousness, also display their practical, daily unrighteousness. Their wicked attitudes, and words, and actions.

-Take **some illustrations** of their unrighteousness, referenced in this psalm.

-[Read vs. 12, and 32.

We're not told exactly **why** the wicked were plotting 阴谋, 策划 against the believers, or seeking to kill them. But today, many unbelievers really hate the steady lives, and faithful marriages, and loving families of most Christian people. / I'm convinced that some unbelievers start to feel guilty about their own lives, and wrong decisions in life, when they are around such Christians. They sometimes say, or think: "Who do they think they are...those goodie-goodies?"

And when we don't laugh at dirty jokes, and don't boast about our drunkenness or our affairs, or boast about our money...that will frustrate, or anger, many unbelieving people.

-[Vs 14. Read. This has to be set particularly in ancient cultures, where money almost always

meant power. And was used to bribe rulers and judges./ You see that today, in some undeveloped countries. How the wicked, rich people often take advantage of the poor.

The recent collapse 倒塌 of the building in Bangladesh is a good example.

Poor people so desperate for a job, they will risk their lives. For a few dollars a day.

-That's closer to the situation in which David lived, than our situation in North America today.

David may be thinking back to the time when powerful and wicked King Saul was chasing him. Trying to kill him.

**Here's the problem, addressed in this psalm.** The Bible teaches, as a general principle, that as we trust in God, we will be blessed. Not only inwardly. But also outwardly. Materially. However, in our experience often we find just the opposite: that the wicked people are prospering, despite their great wickedness. Despite their unbelief, and their refusal to trust in Jesus. They are prospering, they are succeeding. And we are not. **Life can seem so unfair.**

[Read vs. 1.

-Fretting, not so much the sense of worrying, but more the sense of becoming frustrated, even angry and bitter about the situation. Unbelieving evildoers often are moving ahead, gaining more money, and power, and respect. And we as believers often seem to be falling back.

We might ask: How come we end up struggling so much? Why is life so unfair?

## 2. Let's turn to the righteous, referenced in this psalm.

Remember, the righteous are those justified with the imputed righteousness of Jesus.

And then, out of that justification, they are increasingly being sanctified. We, Christians.

**2. A.** In this psalm God is inspiring David to help give us some perspective on those wealthy, but wicked, people. We can focusing so intently upon these people's wealth, as though we were looking through a microscope显微镜. But God is helping us to back away from the small view, and take the big view. Here's **three thoughts** that will help us, especially about the wicked people who prosper.

**A.1. [Read vs. 1-2.** Ah, they are like grass, in those dry, desert climates气候. That desert grass can grow up quickly, with the dew of the morning, and the sunlight. But in the hot afternoon, that once green grass wilts 枯萎away.

So the unbelieving, wealthy person is strong and powerful. But only for a time. Only for a short time, compared to eternity. What's 70 or 80 or even 90 years. Just a drop in the ocean of eternity. And then they are gone. But the those who trust in God, who have put faith in God's Son, our Saviour, Jesus? By God's grace, we shall live forever.

So, the riches of the wicked, and for all of us, are only temporary 暂时的riches.

**A.2. What is better?** To have just a little bit of money and have Jesus...or to have a lot of money, and not have Jesus? Obviously, having Jesus, is far, far better. [Read vs. 16. The American singer, George Beverly Shea, wrote this song. Maybe some of you know it:

"I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold. I'd rather be His than have riches untold;  
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land; I'd rather be led by His nailpierced hand...  
Than to be the king of a vast domain Or be held in sin's dread sway!  
I'd rather have Jesus than anything ...this world affords today."

That can help put things in perspective...we as Christians are so blessed, with Jesus, with God's love....far, far better than any material thing.

**A.3. Then a brief third thought:** When the wicked, wealthy people are plotting against and destroying the Christians, ultimately最终, God is seeing it all.

And God will ultimately judge them and condemn them. [Read vs. 12-13, 20.

But the main teaching of this psalm **can be applied to many different situations in life.**

Very few of us in our land, today, suffer at the hands of powerful, wealthy people.

Very few of us will ever have the situation where someone is plotting to kill us.

Yet, even for us, often life seems unfair.

And we can become envious of others, who seem to have things better than we do.

-Children, you can be envious 羡慕of a friend whose parents buy them a new laptop computer, or a new Ipad.

-Teens, you can be envious of that other teen who has the popular boyfriend or girlfriend. You could even get angry about it.

-Young adults, it's quite easy to envy those who get married to that seemingly perfect guy or gal.

-Or later in marriage when some couple start to have children perhaps you and your spouse struggle with infertility不孕. You might become envious of them.

-Middleaged couples can envy others in that stage of life. About those who buy that large house, in that nicer neighbourhood. Or those who go on exotic异国情调的 vacations.

-In the workplace, we can become envious of those who are promoted升职 at work, even though we might have greater ability or have been working harder. How easy to become bitter, or angry.

You see, at every stage in life, we can become envious of others.

Christians and non-Christians. Life can seem so unfair.

Here are five thoughts, to help us, from the first verses of this psalm.

Not five easy steps! Rather, this is a collection of godly wisdom, from God, given to help us. When life seems so unfair.

**1. Do not be envious, of anyone.** Vs. 1. No matter who it is. Why is it wrong to envy?

Well, among other things, envying others is begrudging 嫉妒 the Lord of his providence in your life. “Lord, what you have given me is not enough, or not what I expected, or what I think I deserve.” Should the clay say that to the potter? God is the potter...he is our creator, our provider, the one who plans all our days. Should we be dissatisfied? Especially in our context...with so much, in this land, compared to so many? If you and I lived in certain parts of Haiti or Dominican Republic, or some Latin American or African countries...with no job opportunities, with very low pay, with hard work, with so much corruption. OK, I could somewhat understand your envy...wanting a better life.

But how dare we be dissatisfied with God’s providence here in Canada! And even if we are struggling, when we become envious of others, we are focusing on them. We are not thanking the Lord for what he gives us...but we wrongly compare ourselves to others. Stop!

**2. [Read vs. 3. Trust in the Lord and do good.** The first verse, said do not fret, do not envy.

Now with this second section in the poem, here is the positive side: instead of envying, we must practice trusting. Trusting God more. Trusting first in Him as your Saviour from sin. As the one who credits you with Jesus’ perfect righteousness. Trust him for the forgiveness of your sins. Trust him in loving you, in Jesus, as your Heavenly Father. Then, in your Christian living, trust God’s providence. That is, his providing for you, everything that you need.

And, notice the line in the verse 3: As you trust, **seek to do what is good, in his eyes.** Seek to live in a good and godly way. Don’t give up Christian living. Don’t give in to Satan’s work of discouraging you and causing you to envy other people. Trust God. God is in control.

**3. The psalmist is moving us higher and higher.** First, he says, don’t fret or become envious.

Stop it. Then he takes us one step higher, he says: learn to trust God more.

And now, **thirdly**, he moves us to a higher level. When life seems unfair, he says in vs. 4,

**“delight yourself also in the Lord.”** Find more delight in the Divine. Find more joy in Jesus.

How can you do that, practically? Well, remember Paul and Silas, imprisoned in the city of

Philippi because they were preaching about Jesus? What did they do in jail? Say to one another, oh, oh, now we’re done.

Now we’re finished. The authorities are so powerful, this jail is so secure. No. Rather, Luke the writer tells us they started to sing. They sang. Try that sometimes. Just pick up the songbook, or put on some Christian music.

Or say to your spouse, or your children, let’s sing....some Christian families end their mealtimes....

**4. When life seems unfair.** Here’s a 4<sup>th</sup> thing that will help. Look at vs. 7.

**“Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.”** This doesn’t mean sitting around, passively, becoming apathetic 麻木不仁 or lethargic 没精打采的, 懒洋洋的. Rather, this means practicing confidence in the Lord and recognizing that He is control of your life. He’s in control also over that unfair situation.

In those particular situations, when things seem unfair, we just have to rest in the Lord.

Just delight in him, sing praises to him, reflect on all his goodness to you in Jesus...and just let the situation go. Give it to him. He knows the solution. Rest in him. Find your contentment...

**5. Finally, a 5<sup>th</sup> thing.** Much, much more could be brought out from this psalm. There’s just too

much content for one sermon. Whatever you do in the situation, when things seem so unfair, when the wrong people are getting ahead, **just don’t give in to anger.** Read vs. 8.

James chapter 1:20 “man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.”

It’s our human tendency 意向, 性情, out of our fallen nature, to easily get angry. Especially when things seem so unfair.

Verbally angry. Attitudinally angry. Even showing anger in giving people the silent treatment—the psychologists 心理学家 call that passive anger 被动的愤怒.

The joy of the Lord and anger at people cannot co-exist. If you are going to have more delight in

the Lord, you have to have less anger in your heart. So God is warning us...don’t get angry. Rather, God is saying this to us:

“My son, my daughter, don’t become so angry. Let me handle this unfair situation, that evil-doing person. Wait patiently for me. Be still. And delight yourself in me...in my love for you, as my son, my daughter, in Jesus. I will give you all that you need. Just trust in me, more. Do not fret about other people. Do not become envious about others. I am in control.”

**Conclusion:** Among the many covenant promises to Abraham was this promise: Abraham,

you and your descendants shall inherit the land. The territory of Israel. Here in Psalm 37....it’s not about gaining some small, mostly desert territory in modern day Israel.

[Look at vs. 9, vs. 11. 5 times this phrase is found in this psalm.

Jesus quotes from this psalm and expands on it. Matthew 5:5. “The meek 温顺的 shall inherit **the earth.**”

Not merely a piece of the Middle East. But our inheritance in Jesus, when he returns **is the whole earth.** The earth is the Lord’s. And someday His inheritance to us, we will gain it all. A new earth. When Jesus comes again. For a few years, some wicked and unbelieving people will become terribly rich and prosperous 富裕的, 幸福的. And many Christian people will stay poor, as the world measures poverty. But for eternity, in Jesus, we will reign, first in heaven above.

And then, when Jesus returns, we will reign in the new earth. **Let us pray.**