

Series: Psalms

Title: Precepts and Promises to Live By

Text: Psalm 37: 1-40

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Our subject is “Precepts and Promises to Live By.” Psalm 37 gives 8 precepts. A promise accompanies each one. These are not precepts to make a sinner righteous or holy by his works—Christ alone makes a sinner righteous and holy. These are precepts for those Christ *has already made* righteous and holy. This is for you who *were in Christ* when he laid down his life and rose again redeemed from all iniquity. These are for you who *have been made* a new creation by Christ Jesus—so that you know *you are complete in Christ*.

2 Corinthians 5: 14: For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: [all for whom Christ died were totally incapable of adding one thing to our salvation] 15: And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Proposition: The Psalm deals with the prosperity of the wicked while believers are afflicted and suffering in trials. God’s saints face many trials. So we need to be reminded of these precepts and promises continually.

David wrote this Psalm. But these are the words of our Master—you will recognize one statement from his sermon on the mount—so hear these precepts and promises as coming directly from our Prophet, Priest and King to you who know him and love him and want to honor him.

FRET NOT

Psalm 37: 1: 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.

Wicked men have no interest in the gospel whatsoever. They take God’s name in vain, hating God, hating the gospel, hating God’s people. Yet everything seems to go well for the ungodly men of this world.

But God’s saints—who love God, who love our Redeemer, who love his gospel and his people—are afflicted in great trial and great suffering. Many saints barely have even the necessities, much less luxuries. Some are sick and afflicted all their days. I have known brethren who endured great trials one after another while wicked men never seem to have a care in the world.

Yet, Christ says do not burn in jealousy and envy at the prosperity of the wicked—“*for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.*” Sinners are grass. And without Christ all shall perish.

Isaiah 40: 6...All flesh *is* grass, and all the goodness thereof *is* as the flower of the field: 7: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people *is* grass. 8:...but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

Psalms 92:7: When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; *it is* that they shall be destroyed for ever: 8: But thou, LORD, art most high forevermore.

Look to Christ on the cross. God allowed the devil and wicked men *to flourish*, for one reason, so God could make his power and mercy known in their destruction. We see Christ the Just, Christ the Upright, in verses 12-15.

Psalm 37: 12: The wicked plotteth against the Just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. 13: The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming. 14: 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.

Psalm 2: 1: Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? 2: The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying*, 3: Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. 4: He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. 5: Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. 6: Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

God raised up those wicked men to flourish like Pharaoh, that God might make his power and mercy known to his people. When the devil and his wicked men drew their sword against Christ, when they nailed Christ to the cursed tree, by Christ conquering sin, death and hell for his people *their sword entered their own heart*. Maybe that was the message David heard that made him reconsider be jealous and envious of the wicked.

Psalms 73:3: For I was envious at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked...5: They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men...17: Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end. 18: Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. 19: How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.

My grandfather had a large herd of cows. He kept those cows well-fed with plenty of pasture and hay and oats. But he was fattening them up to take to the sale barn for slaughter. Who would envy the calf being fattened for slaughter? That is what God says of the wicked—“*all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever:*”—cut down in this life and the life to come.

And remember this, believer, were it not for God the Father choosing us by his grace, were it not for Christ his Son allowing wicked men to nail him to the cross that he might redeem us, were it not for God the Holy Spirit giving us life and faith in Christ by the incorruptible word of the gospel, *we* would be those workers of iniquity being fattened for slaughter. So believer, fret not. They have all they will ever possess. But God says, “*All things are yours.*” Hear God’s promise to all who are his:

Psalm 37: 10: For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. 11: But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace...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. 18: The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.

TRUST IN THE LORD

Psalm 37: 3: Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

The cure for fretting—for all sin—is *trust in the LORD*. If you have never believed on Christ, I say to you right now, trust in the Lord.

Trust not in oppression and earthly riches—“*Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.*” (Ps 62: 10) Trust not in this world—“*the fashion of this*

world passeth away.” (1 Cor 7: 31) Trust not in your own works—“by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (Rom 3: 20)

Trust in the LORD—for pardon, righteousness, holiness, all you need for salvation—

Psalm 103: 1: « *A Psalm of David.* » Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, *ble*ss his holy name. 2: Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: 3: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; 4: Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; 5: Who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things*; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

Trust in the Lord for daily provisions. — “*Give us this day our daily bread.*” (Mt 6: 11) Trust in the Lord for Divine protection. — “*For He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*” (Ps 91: 11) Trust in the Lord for His good providence. Rom 8: 28: *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*” (Rom 8: 28)

“*And do good*”—do whatever the Lord commands in his holy word, do whatever he has put in your hand to serve him in furthering his gospel—“*so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.*” Read God’s promise and find comfort in this sure word:

Psalm 37: 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.

Notice how God’s people do good. And notice the promise of God connected with it. We do not do good to get the promise. We do good because God has already given us the promise.

Psalm 37: 21: The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth 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. 23: 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. 25: I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. 26: He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed. 27: Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore...29: The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.

Every believer is safe in the unchanging love of God in Christ; we are safe under Christ's blood. God promises we shall be fed—both the Bread from heaven as well as our daily bread. So do good as Christ commands. We really have nothing to worry about.

DELIGHT THYSELF IN THE LORD

Psalm 37: 4: Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

Delight means find your merriment and joy *in the LORD*. Psalm 1 declares that the blessed man is he whose,

Psalm: 1: 2:...delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3: And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The more we are in God's word reading of Christ’s finished redemption of his particular people then the more we desire to know more of him—*he shall give thee the desire of thine heart*. The more we hear of

God's absolute sovereignty over all things then the more we desire his will be done—*he shall give thee the desire of thine heart.* he more we desire to be more like Christ—*he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

Believer, when you are fretful and fearful and doubting, don't go to another person and seek help; go to the scriptures. Go to the Psalms, or the gospels, or those encouraging passages you love and read them. Apply them to yourself. The scriptures are for your comfort, your edification, and your faith. Delight thyself—find your joy and comfort—in the LORD. And [he promises] he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

COMMIT THY WAY UNTO THE LORD

Psalm 37: 5: Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

Nothing causes our minds to be tossed like trying to save ourselves by our works—both in salvation and in our daily affairs. But the wise man said, "*Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*" (Pro 16: 3) If you commit all to Him, and trust him, your mind will be settled and sure that the Lord shall bring it to pass.

But commit all thy way unto him and trust him also. Be resigned to the truth that he shall bring it to pass. Whatever it is in your life that needs to come to pass for God's glory and your good, God shall bring it to pass. Go through scripture and read how many times God made a promise then later you read, "*And it came to pass.*" God's will always comes to pass. Whatever comes to pass, is God's will. Concerning all his promises toward his people, he shall bring it to pass. Therefore, we can do as this songwriter said,

If the world from you withhold
Of its silver and its gold
And you have to get along
With meager fair
Just remember in His Word
How He feeds the little bird
Take your burden to the Lord
And leave it there

If your body suffers pain
And your health you can't regain
And your soul is almost sinking in despair
Jesus the Lord knows the pain you feel
He can save and He can heal
Take your burden to the Lord
And leave it there

When your youthful days are gone,
And old age is stealing on,
And your body bends beneath the weight of care.
He will never leave you then,
He'll go with you to the end,
So take your burden to the Lord
And leave it there."

Another hymn writer wrote:

It's Thy way, not mine, O Lord

However dark it be
Lead me by Thine own hand O Lord
Choose out my path for me

Smooth, let it be or rough
It will be still the best
Winding or straight, it matters not
It will lead me to Thy rest

I dare not choose my lot
I would not if I might
But, choose thou for me O Lord
That I may walk aright

Not mine, not mine the choice
In things both great and small
Be Thou my Guide, my Strength
My Wisdom, and my All

REST IN THE LORD

Psalm 37: 7: 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.

The word *rest* is to be silent and still in the Lord as opposed to murmuring or being anxious. Once we have committed it all to the LORD and put all our trust in him then we are to *wait patiently*, even though we see wicked men prospering and we do not see God bringing our way to pass.

Isaiah 30: 15: For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength:

I cannot rest as long as I am trying to help myself. But if I have really committed it to Christ and trust that he shall bring it to pass then I can rest and patiently wait on the LORD even when it appears all is against me.

Do you have rest and peace? Not many people do. This is a world of unrest. Christ said, "*Come to Me and I will give you rest.*" He said, "*Cease from your labors and enter into His rest.*" Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him.

CEASE FROM ANGER

Psalm 37: 8: Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. 9: For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

This is the hardest of all. We do get angry. I am guilty as the next. Cease from anger against God's Providence. Cease from anger against unbelievers. Cease from anger against relatives. Cease from anger at other believers. Cease from anger before it leads to vengeance.

Brethren, do not let another person's bad behavior cause you to lose your peace and your rest. "*For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*" (Ja 1: 20) Anger is not going to change the situation, except to make it worse. Besides that, it robs us of our fellowship with God. Cease from anger.

Remember Joseph toward his brothers. After all that they did to him, rather than be angry, Joseph said “*But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.*” (Gen 50: 20-21)

DEPART FROM EVIL

Psalm 37: 27: 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.

God has given us a new spirit, to use judgment, to discern that which is good and that which is evil. This is why the sheep hear the voice of Christ and a stranger they will not follow. Why? It is because “*he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.*” (1 Cor 2: 15)

How do those born of the Spirit know the truth from a lie? We are told the answer in this Psalm:

Psalm 37: 30: 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.

The mouth of the righteous speaks of God’s Wisdom and God’s mighty works giving God all the glory! Those in whom God has written the gospel speak of God’s wisdom in knowing how to be a just God and a Savior. Only God is that wise. How could God slay every guilty, elect child of God in strict justice so that his law is upheld and, at the same time, give us life by his mercy? It is only by God himself coming in the person of his dear Son and bearing our sin himself. Only by God’s Son being made a curse for us could we be redeemed from the curse and God remain just. But thank God, he is that wise! The righteous speak this message because “*the law of his God is in his heart*” and out of the heart the mouth speaks. (Lu 6: 45)

If a man will not preach the truth, he does not believe the truth. When you hear a message that is not of God’s righteousness and God’s works, “*depart from evil and do good; and dwell for evermore. For the LORD loveth judgment.*” He loves them who, by his grace, bear the cross of Christ, willing to suffer rejection at the hands of men for the glory of his dear Son. Again, we have a promise from God concerning those who would persecute us:

Psalm 37: 32: The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. 3: The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.

Isaiah 54: 17: No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness *is* of me, saith the LORD.

WAIT ON THE LORD

Psalm 37: 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.

Wicked men who pretend to be the LORD’s do not wait on the LORD. They do not persevere, keeping his way. Instead, they fall away. This Psalm tells us that very thing:

Psalm 37: 35: 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.

But those in whom Christ dwells, wait. We persevere in faith, keeping Christ's way to the end.

Psalm 37: 37: 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.

Here is the reason the Lord's people wait and continue to the end.

Psalm 37: 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.

So as we do these other things by the grace of God, we also wait on the Lord's return. But remember, the Lord never moves before his time and he is never late in his purposes. "*In the fullness of time, he sent his Son.*" In the fullness of time, He called you. In the fullness of time, he delivers us out of the trial. And in the fullness of time, he shall exalt us to heavens' glory. The verse says "*Wait on the Lord, keep his way and he will exalt you to inherit the land.*" The apostle Peter called it "*due time.*"

1 Peter 5: 5: God resiseth the proud and giveth grace to the humble. 6: Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: 7: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Hear this last word encouraging us to wait on the Lord.

Hebrews 10: 35: Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. 36: For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. 37: For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. 38: Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Therefore, brethren, fret not. Trust in the LORD. Delight thyself in the LORD. Commit thy way unto the LORD. Rest in the LORD. Cease from anger. Depart from evil. And wait on the LORD.

Amen!