

Psalms 37-40 Chapter Study

INTRO – Discovery of ancient Hebrew at Elah

Psalm 37

This psalm of builds on the previous.

He calls the righteous to not get worked-up at the seeming well-being of the wicked.

Divine justice will come in due time.

¹ Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.

It's hard **not** to get upset when you see abuse & injustice.

What makes it even **harder** is when those who commit it **get away with it**, even **profit** by it.

The problem is, if you don't rein in such thoughts, you can begin to question the justice of God. But God **will** judge!

² For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb.

In the right time, justice will prevail! So -

³ Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.

This contrasts with the envy of v. 1.

Don't be jealous when it seems like the wicked are doing well because the justice they so richly deserve will come.

Instead, feast on the good God gives His own. There will be **no** judgment there.

⁴ Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

What a great promise.

This word 'delight' is **awnag**. It means **exquisite delight**.

It speaks of something that lifts the heart & fills it with **utmost pleasure**.

It was used to describe the most satisfying & tasty delicacy. [noodle @ PF Chang's]

[Preach]

⁵ Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring *it* to pass.

Commit is **gawlal** & means to **wallow** in, to **roll over on**. [Preach]

⁶ He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday.

In contrast to the evil of the wicked who sometimes seem to get away with it – they shall be put down in judgment, while in the end, it's the righteous who will stand forth as the example & testimony for all creation to see.

In Zechariah 9 we have this amazing promise -

¹⁶The Lord their God will save them in that day, as the flock of His people. For they *shall be like* the jewels of a crown, lifted like a banner over His land— ¹⁷For how great is its goodness and how great its beauty!

⁷ Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

As we see the spirit of antichrist already at work, preparing things for the emergence of great evil – don't fret! For everything is happening just as God has ordained.

⁸ Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret—*it* only *causes* harm.

That is soooo true. Don't get worked up over things you have no power over.

Instead, when you find yourself getting worked up – remind & comfort yourself in God's righteous judgment.

Psalm 38

This is a song of sorrow. David has been chastened by God for sin by being hammered with an intense physical trial.

He cries out to God for mercy & deliverance.

¹ O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure!

As a father himself, David knows how hot anger can increase the tone of discipline.

So he asks God to not whoop him out of anger.

This is a great word of advice for parents! Make sure before you apply discipline to your children you've got **your** anger under control.

2 For Your arrows pierce me deeply, and Your hand presses me down.

3 *There is* no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger, nor *any* health in my bones because of my sin.
David knows that the trial he's in is the result of his own moral failure.

The distress is God's chastening for sin.

Important lesson here – when trouble comes on us, need to be thoughtful as to **why**.

Before you rush to plead for deliverance, ask the Lord to who you the cause, reason behind it.

Attack of enemy? Protection & deliverance.

Consequence of foolish choices? Learn & not repeat.

Discipline for sin? Repent & confess & learn.

4 For my iniquities have gone over my head; Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

5 My wounds are foul *and* festering because of my foolishness.

David understands that ultimately his pain is self-inflicted.

6 I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.

7 For my loins are full of inflammation, And *there is* no soundness in my flesh.

8 I am feeble and severely broken; I groan because of the turmoil of my heart.

He's suffering some kind of physical ailment that's brought him tremendous pain.

Like Job, his pain has moved him to ask some deep questions.

9 Lord, all my desire *is* before You; And my sighing is not hidden from You.

10 My heart pants, my strength fails me;

This is what someone in intense pain does – they pant; short, shallow breaths.

As for the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me.

No hope.

11 My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague, And my relatives stand afar off.

One of the few comforts the physically ill can get is a tender & understanding companion.

It adds to the suffering when those who are closest withdraw.

The rejection becomes just one more grief add to the rest.

12 Those also who seek my life lay snares *for me*; Those who seek my hurt speak of destruction, And plan deception all the day long.

David enemies were taking advantage of his being out of it to lay out their conspiracies against him.

13 But I, like a deaf *man*, do not hear; And *I am* like a mute *who* does not open his mouth.

14 Thus I am like a man who does not hear, And in whose mouth *is* no response.

David is so done in by his pain he can't answer or deal with his enemies.

Having poured out his soul in sorrow, he turns to reinvest his trust in God.

15 For in You, O Lord, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God.

16 For I said, "*Hear me*, lest they rejoice over me, Lest, when my foot slips, they exalt *themselves* against me."

17 For I *am* ready to fall, And my sorrow *is* continually before me.

18 For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin.

Here's the proof the chastening of God has WORKED – David knows the cause is his sin.

He genuinely repents of it – seeing it for the nasty thing it is.

He isn't just saying "uncle" here so he can get out from under the pain.

He own the fact that his sin is a hideous mess & deserving of judgment.

19 But my enemies *are* vigorous, *and* they are strong; And those who hate me wrongfully have multiplied.

20 Those also who render evil for good, They are my adversaries, because I follow *what is* good.

21 Do not forsake me, O Lord; O my God, be not far from me!

22 Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!

While David admits that it was proper for God to deal with him as he ahs, he knows it would also not be right for

the wicked to get away with their evil plans.
So he asks God to halt their plots & turn them to nothing.

Psalm 39

To the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

This song is most likely **another composition** based on the trial of Psalm 38.

This was such a major event in David's life it promoted a **couple** psalms.

1 I said, "I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, While the wicked are before me."

Smart move, this is. Recognize when the emotions are running high that you can be moved to say something you will later regret.

When faced with enemies, one of the big temptations is to say something hurtful.

So, silence may be the best course.

2 I was mute with silence, I held my peace *even* from good; And my sorrow was stirred up.

The problem with staying silent is that you can think of all kinds of things to say that **seem really good!**

SO, which is better, to say something really clever, or stay silent and not worry about saying something regrettable? Silence is better.

3 My heart was hot within me; While I was musing, the fire burned. *Then* I spoke with my tongue:

But when he spoke, it wasn't directed at his enemies who provoked him.

His words were directed where they needed to be – to God in prayer.

4 "Lord, make me to know my end, And what *is* the measure of my days, *That* I may know how frail I *am*."

5 Indeed, You have made my days *as* handbreadths, And my age *is* as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state *is* but vapor. Selah

While the days that are marked by pain & difficulty can seem to crawl by at a snail's pace, from the perspective of eternity, this life will seem like a flash of lightning.

It's all about perspective. [child & adult, seniors]

David asks God for the wisdom to see that life is short & that we only have so much time to do what needs to be done.

There's no time to waste or fiddle around doing things that don't matter.

6 Surely every man walks about like a shadow; Surely they busy themselves in vain; He heaps up *riches*, And does not know who will gather them. [after he's gone]

7 "And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You."

8 Deliver me from all my transgressions; Do not make me the reproach of the foolish.

David knew he was being watched by his enemies & that when he stumbled, they fixed on it to heap scorn on God.

So he asked the Lord to deliver him from moral weakness so God's glory would not be sullied by his error.

9 I was mute, I did not open my mouth, Because it was You who did *it*.

He understood his ordeal was the righteous chastening of God & would **not** complain.

10 Remove Your plague from me; I am consumed by the blow of Your hand.

11 When with rebukes You correct man for iniquity, You make his beauty melt away like a moth; Surely every man *is* vapor. Selah

12 "Hear my prayer, O Lord, And give ear to my cry; Do not be silent at my tears; For I *am* a stranger with You, A sojourner, as all my fathers *were*."

13 Remove Your gaze from me, that I may regain strength, Before I go away and am no more."

By 'gaze' David means God's inspection & investigation of him.

If you were with us in our study of Job, this was something Job said repeatedly – that he felt like he was under the intense inspection of God's critical eye, searching out his faults, of which he had plenty.

Job asked for God time & again to stop looking at him like that.

David feels much the same way & asks God to remove His penetrating gaze to see him through the eyes of mercy & compassion instead of judgment.

Psalm 40

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

In most of the psalms of lament, the psalmist begins in sorrow but rallies to faith by the end.

This psalm reverses that. It **begins** in praise **but turns** to lament.

1 I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry.

2 He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, *And* established my steps.

3 He has put a new song in my mouth— Praise to our God; Many will see *it* and fear, And will trust in the Lord.

4 Blessed *is* that man who makes the Lord his trust, And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

5 Many, O Lord my God, *are* Your wonderful works *Which* You have done; And Your thoughts toward us [for us!] Cannot be recounted to You in order; *If* I would declare and speak *of them*, They are more than can be numbered.

This is such a crucial truth; it needs a **selah!**

David is stunned by just how mindful of us God is; how much He's done & is doing **for** us.

If we could only know the tiniest particle of how much God loves us, it would **utterly** transform everything!

Niccolo Machiavelli *The Prince*; Leonardo de Medici – Florence. 1513

A ruler must do **whatever** it takes to get, increase, & keep power.

“Is it better for the ruler to be feared or loved?” Feared

No! Loved.

What better way to motivate us to love than by considering how greatly we ARE loved by the Greatest Lover?

6 Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.

This is a remarkable insight for David to make.

Remember that for the people of God at that time, the center of religious devotion & service was the altar. The Law of Moses spelled out in detail the various sacrifices the people were to offer.

But the point of all those offerings & sacrifices was to restore worship – to **renew** people in their **relationship** with God.

God didn't want a bunch of burning beef & mutton so much as He wanted the **hearts** of the people.

As David focused his entire soul on listening to what God would say to him, he heard the invitation to surrender completely to him.

7 Then I said, “Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book *it is* written of me.

8 I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law *is* within my heart.”

Because David was a student of the Word of God, he understood what God wanted was total surrender.

God wanted His word, not just to be an external thing that detailed how to make offerings.

It was to be a living thing residing in the heart – like the living voice of God.

While these verses were a true reflection of the thoughts of David, in Hebrews, these verses are described as being **prophetic** of Jesus.

Truly, all Moses' writings present a picture of Jesus. / He fulfills **all** of the Law.

9 I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness In the great assembly; Indeed, I do not restrain my lips, O Lord, You Yourself know.

10 I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth From the great assembly.

The blessing of God's forgiveness, the sweetness of fellowship with Him was so good David couldn't help but announce it to others.

Now the Psalm turns from praise to entreaty -

11 Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O Lord; Let Your lovingkindness and Your truth continually preserve me.

12 For innumerable evils have surrounded me; My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up; They are more than the hairs of my head; Therefore my heart fails me.

One of the things that spending time in the presence of a holy God does is reveal our imperfection.

So, on one hand, David rejoices in the grace of God.

But that grace becomes all the more amazing for the *flaws* it reveals.

The challenge right at this point is where we're going to look; at God & His grace, or our brokenness.

David shows us where we need to take our failure -

13 Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; O Lord, make haste to help me!

When we see something out of alignment with God's will, ask Him to forgive & fix it.

14 Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion Who seek to destroy my life; Let them be driven backward and brought to dishonor Who wish me evil.

15 Let them be confounded because of their shame, Who say to me, "Aha, aha!"

WE saw this last week – David's utter disdain for these guys who say this – as though they've discovered some fatal flaw that will destroy David.

16 Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; Let such as love Your salvation say continually, "The Lord be magnified!"

Magnified – become greater, bigger, more powerful, honored, promoted.

17 But I *am* poor and needy; *Yet* the Lord thinks upon me. You *are* my help and my deliverer; Do not delay, O my God.