

Don't Fret • Psalm 37:1-11

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Getting Even*

1. A truck driver dropped in at an all-night restaurant in Broken Bow, Nebraska.
2. The waitress had just served him when three swaggering, leather-jacketed motorcyclists entered and came over to him, apparently spoiling for a fight.
3. One grabbed the hamburger off his plate; another took a handful of his French fries; and the third picked up his coffee and began to drink it.
4. The trucker did not respond as one might expect.
 - a. he just calmly rose, picked up his check,
 - b. walked to the front of the room, put the check and his money on the cash register, and went out the door.
5. The waitress followed him to put the money in the till and stood watching out the door as the big truck drove away into the night.
6. When she returned, one of the cyclists said to her, "Well, he's not much of a man, is he?"
7. She replied, "I can't answer to that, but he's sure not much of a truck driver. He just ran over three motorcycles out in the parking lot."

B. *Lament*

1. Many of the Psalms are laments over the seeming injustices that are allowed to go on in the world
2. The psalmist bemoans the fact that the wicked do well while the godly suffer
3. This Psalm is different - it seems almost like an *answer* to those other psalms
4. And there's a good reason for that that we discover in v. 25

C. *Background - V. 25a*

I have been young, and now am old

1. David is speaking from the perspective of a man who has lived a full life!
 - a. in fact, very full!
 - b. he has seen and experienced a lot
 - c. and he has learned some important lessons
2. He speaks as an *elder*, wanting to impart to others the wisdom age has taught him
3. And Psalm 37 bears a message that finds special application to today
4. Jesus and the prophets foretold that the last days would be marked by an increase in evil - That sin would multiply and corruption would abound
5. We see that today - the world is fairly reeling from the news
 - a. bombings in Kenya & Tanzania
 - b. kidnappers and mutilators in Mexico
 - c. terror in Sudan
 - d. corruption and scandal in high office
 - e. children lying in wait with high powered rifles next to school playgrounds and then opening fire on their peers and teachers
6. What makes it even worse is the pervasiveness of modern media
 - a. in the ancient world, news traveled only as fast as the fastest horse and courier

- b. today, news travels almost at the speed of light
 - 1) radio signals, generated from a station in Kenya bounce off a satellite orbiting high overhead
 - 2) they reflect back down to a receiving station in New York,
 - 3) and are then simultaneously pumped out to our radios and TV's
 - c. just 100 years ago, it would have taken news of the bombing in Nairobi at *least* a week to arrive in the US
 - d. but last week, we heard about it and saw video footage of the ruined embassy buildings within an *hour*!
7. The cumulative effect is that we are inundated and overwhelmed about what is taking place in the world around us
 - a. from our own neighborhoods
 - b. to the farthest reaches of Africa and Asia
 8. Little of what is reported is positive; it is almost solely negative
 - a. reports of violence, terrorism, and genocide
 - b. we hear about gross injustice
 - c. we see tragedy
 - d. evil seems to grow unchecked!
 9. Everywhere we look, wickedness seems to triumph over good
 10. And as the people of God, there is an outrage - a profound sense of anger
 11. We ask, "How long Lord? How long till all the evil ends?"
 12. And what is hardest, is seeing the evil and wicked not only get away with their sin, but to see so often how they laugh about it and prosper in it!
 13. This heightens our outrage! THE WICKED PROSPER!!!!!!!!!!
 14. It's easy to get worked up and begin to lose confidence in the whole idea of *justice*
 - a. *because* we fail to **SEE** the judgment of the wicked,
 - b. we begin to doubt the providence and justice of God
 15. This psalm answers that outrage and counsels us how to not lose our trust and confidence in the Lord

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 1-2

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

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

1. As David wrote this, I'm sure he had to be thinking back on the many previous psalm he had written,
 - a. because so many of them were just that -
 - b. a fretting over evildoers
2. But now, as he speaks from the perspective of age and experience, he sets the record straight
3. How important it is that we listen to and heed the counsel of our elders!
4. David tells us - "**Don't get all worked up into a rage over evil**"
 - a. "and don't let yourself slip into the place where you become envious of the seeming *wealth* of sinners"
 - b. because their prosperity is short live
5. Like the grass, it is here today - but it is gone tomorrow
6. That's what the wicked are like -

- a. for now they seem to be so virile and strong
 - b. their wealth grows so quickly and they seem to prosper in everything they do
 - c. but it is just for a season
 - d. the day of judgment is coming and they shall be cut down
7. You know, the world system is expert at marketing sin and advertising iniquity
- a. what I mean is this: it's the *prosperous* wicked who are promoted and pushed before the public eye for all to see
 - b. what you don't see are the vast millions who suffer because of evil
 - c. they are tasting first-hand that the wages of sin are death
 - d. for instance: in cigarette ads, we see pictures of happy people
 - 1) they are young, fit, gorgeous!
 - 2) what you don't see in cigarette ads is a hospital cancer ward
 - 3) we don't see a guy on a lung machine, or a family at a graveside mourning the loss of a loved one to emphysema
 - 4) you never see the picture of the woman who is taking a drag on a Virginia Slim through the hole in her throat because lip cancer has ravaged her mouth
8. For every successful sinner the world shines the light on, remember there millions of others standing in the shadow of the valley of death

B. Vs. 3-6

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

1. If we allow our theology to be drawn from the daily news, we are going to be driven to doubt the justice and providence of God
2. David knew that first hand as the Psalms show us
3. So he now tells us the great secret that time and experience had taught him
4. Don't focus on the lives and success of the evil - instead, put your trust *totally* in the Lord
5. If our focus of attention is on the world, then trusting in the Lord will seem unprofitable
6. But when David calls us to trust in God, he is not counseling us to make a blind leap into the dark
 - a. he is basing that trust on the *covenant* blessings God has promised to those who look to Him
 - b. that's why he uses the covenant *name* of God here
 - c. God has pledged Himself to be the Protector and Provider of His own
 - d. and David's appeal to put our trust in the Lord is an appeal to *remember* that covenant
7. Christian - remember what Jesus said, "This is now the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in *remembrance* of Me."
 - a. don't forget the covenant God has initiated with you through the cross
 - b. keep in the center of your heart and mind the blessings He has promised to shower upon you if you will only keep yourself in the place of blessing by *trusting in Him!*
8. David said, "**Trust in the LORD, and do good**"
 - a. envy of the wicked might prompt some to emulate their wickedness
 - b. but genuine trust in God will result in our doing what is right
9. He says, "**Dwell in the land and feed on His faithfulness.**"
 - a. David continues this idea of the covenant blessings of God
 - b. *God* gave the land to Israel, and their prosperity was the result of His blessing

- c. when he says, "Dwell in the land and feed on His faithfulness" he is telling them to lay claim to the fullness of the blessings God had promised
 - d. they had a choice, they could lay claim to the covenant of God and draw their strength from Him - or -
 - e. they could live in agreement with the world and make It their source
10. You and I have the same choice - we can either live in agreement with the world or God, but we can't be in agreement with both
11. In v. 4 David says,

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

- a. with the word "delight" we see a classic example of how sometimes it's difficult to translate a word from one language to another
 - b. this word presents the picture of someone who abandons him or herself into joyous celebration
 - c. let me illustrate:
 - 1) ever watch a pro football game?
 - 2) the TV camera will occasionally pan over the fans in the stands
 - 3) they usually try to find the *true* fans - people who "delight" in their team
 - 4) and they demonstrate that delight by dressing in the team colors and wildly cheering their team to victory
 - 5) that's a good picture of this word
12. David says if we delight ourselves in the Lord, He will give us the desires of our hearts
- a. and I believe that that is an *iron-clad guarantee*
 - b. you know why I believe that?
 - c. because if a man or woman delights him or herself in the Lord, their desires are going to be totally in line with God's desires -
 - d. He will fashion a heart in them that beats in perfect time with His!
13. David writes,

{5} Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.

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

14. Proverbs 3:5 & 6 puts it this way

{5} Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;

{6} In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

C. Vs. 7-11

{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.

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

1. "Rest in the Lord" is literally, "Be silent to the Lord"
 - a. when I read this I wonder sometimes if the Holy Spirit didn't have me in particular in mind
 - b. when I see evil, I can get so worked up!
 - c. and then my mouth starts yapping
 - 1) I condemn the wicked -
 - 2) I criticize those I think should be doing more to stop it

- 3) and then I begin to call down judgments and anathemas
- d. these verses put things in their proper perspective
 - 1) God is on His throne
 - 2) and everything ULTIMATELY is progressing just exactly according to His plan
 - 3) judgment will indeed come - and when it does it will be awesome, terrifying, and utterly PERFECT
- e. instead of making so much puny noise and getting so hot and bothered and distraught over evil, I need to wait patiently for God
- 2. It also helps to remember how glad I am that God did not jump to judgment at the prompting of past generations
 - a. if He had, I wouldn't be here today
 - b. aren't you thankful God has delayed His judgment?
 - c. aren't you glad His terrible wrath has not swept away the ungodly?
- 3. Just as God's judgment is perfect, so is His patience and grace
- 4. He delays judgment only because in love, He is waiting for the last of those who will repent
- 5. And when that number is full - Swift as lightning, it will come down on the wicked
- 6. But our getting all worked up and indignant over sin will do nothing but wear us out,
- 7. And even worse, it might cloud our view of the knowledge of God
 - a. mistaking God's patience and grace
 - b. for weakness or indecision
- 8. Immediately following the bombings of our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the leaders of the military met to discuss their options
 - a. a response was considered
 - b. first they asked, who did it - where are they, and can we get them?
 - c. then different options were discussed
 - d. once these were formulated, the political leaders were brought in - because the decision was theirs
 - e. the political and military ramifications were considered
 - f. and then it came down to a simple decision - should we do it?
 - g. the answer was "Yes," and though it took a week - it eventually became manifest when the bombs fell from the sky
- 9. Rebellious mankind is continually lobbing bombshells against the kingdom of God
 - a. God has considered His response
 - b. He knows exactly who has done what and where they are living
 - c. but He doesn't convene a conclave of angels to get their permission before He strikes
 - d. He is King - and the decision is His alone to make
 - e. one day His judgment will fall from the heavens
 - f. and just as word was sent out to our people in Sudan to leave before the Tomahawk missiles struck
 - g. so the word has gone out for people to repent, to turn away from the world system that is in rebellion against God and be saved
 - h. we gave our people a week - God has given a bit longer
 - i. but the day of grace is swiftly nearing it's end

{9} For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the LORD, They shall inherit the earth.

{10} For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look

carefully for his place, But it shall be no more.

{11} But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

10. David began by telling us not to get all worked up and envious over the prosperity of evildoers
11. Here he tells us why
12. Because while their prosperity is short lived and quickly lost, God's people will enjoy an eternity of the very finest blessings God has to offer
13. The wicked will be cut off, but the meek shall inherit the earth
14. And just as they delighted themselves in the Lord, so He will immerse them in the abundance of peace
15. This word "peace" is another rich word which speaks of the benefits of being in harmony with others and the environment - it pictures Adam and Eve before the Fall
16. And who is it that will inherit the earth and all its fullness? The meek
17. Those who, unlike the wicked, who push their way to the front of the line and make things happen by force and corruption; the meek are those who have put their trust in the Lord and committed their way to Him
18. Their meekness is not *weakness*; rather it is a tough minded determination to not play by the world's rules, but to submit and surrender to God and leave their fate in His hands

III. CONCLUSION

A. Why The Wicked Succeed

1. We are justly outraged when we see the wicked prevail
2. But you know why the wicked so often succeed while the godly suffer?
3. Because the world system is in rebellion against God and the ungodly are not afraid to live by the corrupt rules that govern it
 - a. they aren't hesitant to use *force* and *intimidation*
 - b. they don't think twice about using *deception* to accomplish their ends
 - c. in their minds, it's only *corruption* if you get caught - other than that they call it *shrewdness* or *business savvy*
4. But the people of God refuse to dance to the world's music
5. Our feet are directed by another melody - the sweet strains of heaven
6. Our meekness lies in the fact that we refuse to live by *force*, whether it be physical, emotional or spiritual
7. No - we live by *grace and truth*; following our Lord Jesus who is their perfect embodiment

B. Our Destiny

1. Christian - in this day when evil seems to grow and wax worse
2. Don't fret and lose heart
3. Keep the end in sight by faith
4. Live not for today - but for that day!