

"FRET NOT"

Psalm 37:1-11

Intro: For many of us who have not only grown weary of counselors, but who have become increasingly suspicious of the human wisdom which they so often promote, it may be hard for us to accept statements like Solomon made in his book of Proverbs when he said,

Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety (Prov. 11:14).

Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established (Prov. 15:22).

For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety (Prov. 24:6).

So Solomon in his great God-given wisdom advised not only counsel, but a multitude of counselors.

However, he was not advising that people seek just any counselor, but counselors who know God, who know His Word and His ways, godly counselors who walk with God and who trust Him. They have never been many in number, but God always has had those who are schooled in divine wisdom, and, therefore, who are qualified to help us in finding and knowing and doing the will of God.

We are inclined to forget also that our Lord Jesus Christ is called in Scripture, a "Wonderful Counselor." In fact, I am sure that you would agree with me when I say that He is the greatest Counselor of all. And what I say about Him applies equally to God the Father and to God the Holy Spirit. And we have in the Bible the infallible wisdom of an infinitely holy Godhead. No one ever goes wrong when following the teaching of the Scriptures. Truth does not change just as God does not change. And so, even though the Scriptures were completed almost 2,000 years ago, the wisdom of Scripture stands true forever.

Counselors are really teachers, aren't they? And so we could go down the list of men and women whom we meet on the pages of Scripture, godly people, to whose writings or recorded words found in Scripture we can go today to find the guidance we need.

One of those counselors is David, King David. And it is in his Psalms that we find much divine wisdom because he was one of those who wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. God taught him in many different ways. David experienced many trials, and it was in those trials that he

became schooled in the wisdom of God. One of the greatest of his Psalms is the Psalm before us tonight, a Psalm which I want to consider with you in part tonight, and on two following Sunday nights. It is a longer Psalm than many that David wrote. In it he was speaking, not to God, but to the people of God. We can say almost 3,000 years after David lived that he was speaking to us. Psalm 37 is for us. It presents for us the conflict that we are all involved in, the conflict between righteousness and wickedness, and the confusion that we often experience when it seems that wickedness prevails while righteousness is defeated. And in this Psalm David gives us counsel as to how we are to face wicked men and the forces of wickedness in the world as they touch our lives. To escape from wickedness is impossible because we have it in our own hearts. We were born in sin and in ignorance of God and His ways. By His grace He has drawn us to Himself, saved us, and ever since has been teaching us His will through His Word as we recognize, though usually so slowly, His providential dealings in our lives. The conflict we are all involved in often produces the wrong feelings in our hearts, and we are inclined when in the conflict to do the wrong thing, to trust in ourselves or others, instead of trusting in the Lord. And so God has given us this Psalm as a part of the larger body of truth which we find in God's Word to be a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path (see Psa. 119:89).

The first seven verses were the twelfth and last assignment in the memory work which we have just completed. The whole Psalm is worth memorizing, and perhaps we can do that some time. King David is our counselor and teacher. God has taught him, and he has learned by his own experience what he would teach us. He is very obviously dealing with a promise that has confused many, has irritated many, and has caused many to turn from faith to unbelief. It is the problem that faces more people than we can possibly count concerning the terrible murders which have taken place recently in Littleton, Colorado. But it also hits us in matters which are much less important in all of our lives when it seems that injustice prevails and justice has to take a back seat.

David would have us know that it is far easier to do the wrong thing in such circumstances, than it is to do the right. And so he began this long Psalm on a negative note which really carries through the first eleven verses of the Psalm, and then the word is not used at all in the remainder of the Psalm. I refer to the word "fret" which David used three times in a negative sense. That is, they were not to get fretful. See vv. 1, 7, and 8.

Calvin pointed out that David began with a general principle. We might

improve upon that and say that David began with two general principles. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he began with a precept and a principle. One is a prohibition; the other is a truth that Derek Kidner says is "rooted in time" (p. 149). And so let us look at verses 1 and 2. When we see the apparent prosperity and success of the wicked, what are we not to do, and what encouragement does David give us for responding negatively to what we see almost everywhere we turn?

I. DAVID'S PRECEPT AND PRINCIPLE (Psa. 37:1-2).

The precept is in verse 1; the principle is in verse 2.

The precept is a command neither to be fretful, nor to be envious when we see the prosperity of the wicked. It seems that if we are fretful we can easily become envious.

When I think of the word "fretful" I think of the restlessness of a little child. You know how a baby will whimper as he is waking up, or we might say that a child has trouble going to sleep because he was fretful. Well, that is a proper use of the word in English, but that is not at all what David had in mind. He was talking about one who explodes in anger. It describes one who is burning with wrath. Sometimes we call it *righteous indignation*, but it is the right kind of feeling when it has gotten out of control.

But sometimes it seems that wicked people (who really are people who have no place for God in their lives) have such an easy time. They do what we know is sinful, and it seems that they get away with it. On the other hand, we seek to please God, but it often leads us into trouble. It all seems so unfair, and, if we look at it in a purely human way, it is unfair. But David would have us know, that such a response to the evil in the world is never right for those of us who know the Lord. And he is going to proceed through the Psalm to show us how we should behave.

However, for our initial encouragement he tells us what is stated in verse 2. (Read.) How did David know this? He knew it by divine revelation, and he had seen it worked out many times in his life. David had a strong faith in the absolute sovereignty of God in all of the affairs of life, and over every person on the face of the earth.

We have recently had a gigantic reason to be fretful in our country as we have seen the evidence of sin in high places, and those who were in a

position to do something about it, refusing to take appropriate action. But why is such a response not only wrong, but unnecessary? Read verse 2 and you will see why.

But perhaps we are bothered by the word "soon." If something were to be done "soon," we say, it should have happened long before now. But let us remember that God's ways, and God's timing, are different from ours. And even if we never see justice done in this life, life is very short, but the principle still stands. Man is as fragile as the grass, and his life at best is only a vapor, but eternity under divine judgment is without an ending. The truth is that God will judge all evil. Nothing escapes His notice, and He will make things right. However, we often see it in this life. The person who does not fear God is in a very precarious position, and he is so easily deceived into thinking that he has gotten away with the evil that he has done.

From this point David went on to point out

II. THE ALTERNATIVE BEHAVIOR THAT IS PLEASING TO THE LORD (Psa. 37:3-7).

When we see situations like David was describing in verse 1, it is because the Lord has a purpose even in the fact that we see them. *When we see them, they are to cause us, not to be fretful and envious, but so we will turn to the Lord with an even greater faith.* We are usually powerless to do anything about what grieves us so much, but we know the One Who has all things under His total control.

So what are we to do? At this point David gave us several more precepts for us to obey.

The first is that we need to trust the Lord, trust Him more than we have been trusting Him. If we trust in men to change the situation, we know that that is futile. So we need to trust Him, "and do good." We must not let the sinfulness of evildoers deceive us into doing what is wrong in God's sight. We are to "do good." We need to be more careful than ever that we are living lives that are pleasing to the Lord.

The second thing that David says for us to do is to *delight ourselves in the Lord.* Wicked men delight in their sinfulness because they do not know what is down the road waiting for them. But we are to take greater delight in the Lord, rejoicing in the way He has preserved us from doing much of

the evil which we could have done. We delight in the Lord when we are able to worship Him, and to praise Him, thanking Him for the grace He has exercised in our lives. Delighting ourselves in the Lord also includes the idea of submitting ourselves to Him, yielding our wills to His will. We may wonder at His patience, but while He waits, we are content to wait even though it seems that there is only greater trouble by the Lord's failure to act. We need to remember that His ways are perfect, and so we delight ourselves in Him. And the promise is that He will give us the desires of our hearts. Spurgeon said on this point that "a pleasant duty is here rewarded with another pleasure" (I, p. 171).

The third thing that David said for us to do is to *commit our way unto the Lord*. This word pictures us as carrying the needs of a godless world on our shoulders. We are burdened down with the wickedness which we see all around us. And so David calls upon us *to roll the whole burden that we are carrying upon the Lord*. And again we are reminded of our need to trust the Lord, knowing that whatever needs to be done to carry out His purposes, "He shall bring it to pass." This means that He will do everything that needs to be done for the accomplishment of His purposes. It seems that God's plans have been set aside, or destroyed altogether, but such is never the case. He is "the Lord," and is Who He has always been. He has never been overruled in the past, and He never will be.

As you and I come to verse 6 let us notice that the words, "and He shall," are found also in verse 4 and 5. All doubt is removed as to the outcome because the Lord is the One Who is over all.

Verse 6, therefore, is a glorious promise. There are times, and there were times in David's life, when his own good name was slandered, and we feel that we must do something in our own defense. Spurgeon said,

The more we fret in this case, the worse for us. Our strength is to sit still. The Lord will clear the slandered. If we look to His honor, He will see to ours. It is wonderful how, when faith learns to endure calumny with composure, the filth does not defile her, but falls off like snow-balls from a wall of granite. Even in the worst cases, where a good name is for awhile darkened, Providence will send a clearing like the dawning light, which shall increase until the man once censured shall be universally admired (I, p. 172).

This was true with Joseph. This was true with David. This was true with Daniel. This was true over and over again with Peter and Paul and John,

the Lord's apostles. And it will be true for us, too, if such a situation should ever arise.

And so this promise led to yet another precept, or two precepts in one: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." We are always conscious of time. God does not ignore time, but in His wisdom He sees it in an entirely different way. We feel that if something is not done within a certain time period, all will be lost. That is not possible when the circumstances are in God's hands. He can never be too late. And the wicked, however strong they might be, and however numerous, can never keep the Lord from doing what He intends to do. To rest in the Lord means to be quiet, to be silent, waiting His time, and knowing that His time will most certainly come. And it is in connection with resting in the Lord and waiting for Him, that we come to the second time that David used these all-important words, "fret not."

This brings us to the last part of our text.

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE LORD FOR HIS PEOPLE (Psa. 37: 8-11).

At this point in the Psalm let me ask you to do something. Read the rest of the Psalm, and then tell me what quality the Lord was seeking to work into David's life through all of the exposure he had with wicked people, namely Saul and his own son Absalom.

Derek Kidner says that this Psalm is the finest exposition of the third Beatitude that has ever been written. What is the third Beatitude? If you turn to Matthew 5, and begin to count them you will see that the third is, "**Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth**" (Matt. 5:3).

Do you want God's definition of meekness? We have it here in the first eleven verses of Psalm 37. But it carries on to the end of the Psalm. A meek person is a humble person. He is a gentle person. He is one who accepts God's dealings with himself as good and profitable and glorifying to God.

The Lord is the greatest example we have of one who is meek, and the meekness and gentleness of Christ is what we all need to learn. But it is usually through the wickedness of others that we learn this all-important lesson. Remember what the Lord said about what we need to learn about Him:

28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matt. 11: 28-30).

Here the Lord brought meekness and peace together. Perhaps the reason we don't have more peace about the evil in the world, is because we have not learned to be meek like our Lord.

Let me give you also an illustration from the life of David. We had it not long ago in our daily Bible reading. Do you remember when David was fleeing from Jerusalem to get away from Absalom and those who took part in the insurrection with him, and on the way out he was confronted by a man named Shimei? Shimei threw stones at David, and cursed him, and said that he was getting what he deserved because of what he had done to the house of Saul. At that point King David's nephew, Abishai, spoke up, and this is the conversation that followed:

9 Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

10 And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?

11 And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.

12 It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day (2 Sam. 16:9-12).

This, my dear people, is meekness. This is gentleness. These are the words of a man who looked beyond the present humiliating circumstances of his life to see the hand of the Lord in what was going on in his life.

Where do we see meekness in the life of our Lord? We see it from the beginning of His time on earth to the end, but it never is clearer than in what He said as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. You will remember that He said,

O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt (Matt. 26:39).

Concl: The evidence of meekness is peace. Oh, how the Lord wants us to trust Him, to delight ourselves in Him, to cast our care upon Him, and to rest in Him, waiting patiently as He performs the thing that is appointed for us, as Job did. See Job 23:14. Every trial is a fresh test of our meekness, but there is always grace give for us to trust, delight, commit, rest, and wait. And this is where there is peace.

May the Lord keep us from fretting. And may he keep us from being envious of the wicked who seem to be able to do whatever they want to do without taking the consequences of wrongdoing. The Lord will deal with them. But what He wants from us, and will work in us, is that meekness and lowliness of heart which characterized our blessed Lord while He was here on earth. God is working to make us like His Son, and likeness of Christ includes that meek and quiet heart which Peter told the wives of his generation, "is in the sight of God of great price," very precious.

THE LORD, THE HELPER OF HIS PEOPLE

Psalm 37:12-26

Intro: In every generation there is the conflict between good and evil. It began with Cain and Abel, and it will continue to the end of time. It is not unusual for the wicked to resort to violence. We have seen evidence of that in the tragic murder of students at the Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Often it seems that there is very little intervention on the part of God, and so this often calls into question the exhortations that we had in the first part of Psalm 37. I am speaking of the commands to "fret not," to "trust in the Lord," to "delight" ourselves "in the Lord," to "commit" our ways "unto the Lord," and to "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."

However, the Lord will never deceive us not confound us. In fact, our trials are designed by the Lord to cause us to recognize how greatly and how constantly we need to "fret not," but "trust . . .," etc. But we all have to learn to walk by faith, and this means that we live by what we believe, and not by what we see, as Jerry Bridges has emphasized with us again and again.

But it is true that the Lord helps us. And yet His help is not always obvious. He does not appear to us, nor does He speak to us beyond what we have in the Word. But what we have in the Word is all we need to strengthen our faith so that we will fret not, but trust and delight and commit and rest and wait, while at the same time we continue to do that which is good in the Lord's eyes.

I am going to move around in these verses to bring together what appears to be the many points of emphasis that David was making. And it will be good for us to remember that we are listening to the voice of experience as well as to the inspired Word of God. David was one who had to put the Word of God to the test over and over again, and, as we shall see, he never found the Lord in the least bit unable to meet his needs.

Since David began in our text by telling us about the opposition of the wicked, let me begin there.

I. THE INTENSE HATRED WHICH THE WICKED HAVE FOR THE RIGHTEOUS.

Here I want us to look at three verses: 12 and 14 and the first part of verse

21. There is something that takes place in the mind of a wicked, godless man, when he sees a person who is living to please the Lord. In its more milder phases, it may mean that the wicked will just avoid the righteous, not wanting to have anything to do with him. At other times the wicked will attack with words. But in its more extreme forms we have what is described in these two verses, and we would always see this if it were not for the restraining power of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord was One Who was subjected to the hatred of men as no other person has ever experienced it. It came to Him in all forms all throughout His life here on earth.

Verse 12 tells us that "the wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth." *To plot* means to plan what he is going to do before he attempts to do anything, and he grates and grinds his teeth impatiently waiting for the opportunity to carry out his wicked plans. And so much of wickedness is premeditated. Every detail is worked out. Nothing is left, as we sometimes say, to chance. The wicked do not want any slipup.

But then verse 14 tells us about the execution of the wicked persons plans. There comes the time when he takes his sword, and bends his bow ready to shoot the arrow, and his purpose is to "cast down" and to "slay" the one who is righteous in his manner of life. The Devil is often referred to as the Wicked One, and it would be his greatest pleasure to rid the world entirely of all of the people of God. He sought to do it with the Savior. That failed. So now he continues his attacks upon the saved. And his object is murder.

In verse 21 we see both the greed of the wicked, and their dishonesty. The righteous, on the other hand, are generous and merciful and kind. So often the wicked express their wickedness in selfish ways, and those whom they rob are the victims.

Now we have to admit that many times the wicked succeed in what they plan to do. Cain succeeded. Herod became the tool of the Wicked One, and he put an end to the life of John the Baptist. Judas succeeded. And the list could be extended to a great length when we take what we learn in the Scriptures, and then include all the illustrations of this throughout the history of the church. But even in these times the will of the Lord is being done, and those who are martyred are taken where they will never again be within reach of wicked people. And this is, according to Scripture, "far better." But if this is all we look at, we only have a part of the picture, but not the most important part.

Now let us look at the verses which tell us what is going to become of the wicked. We know what we are about to see because it is revealed to us in the Word, not because it is told by the news media or found in the conversation of men. Let us see what David was able to tell us.

II. THE FATE OF THE WICKED.

Let us start with verse 13. This is not a laugh of pleasure, but a laugh of scorn. What fools men are to think that they can get away with their wicked plans. They may never get caught in this life, but the Lord "seeth that his day is coming." God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, and then all account will be settled in accordance with the righteousness of God Himself.

Look at verse 15. Then look at the first part of verse 17. Go on to verse 20.

Man's plans of wickedness do not always materialize. The Lord sovereignly often intervenes. Saul wanted to kill David, but in the end it was Saul who died, and David had nothing to do with it.

Wickedness seems to be triumphant now, but the victories are so temporary and so incomplete that only a fool would glory in such victories. See the latter part of verse 22.

On the other hand let us look at:

III. THE WAY THE LORD HAS MADE PROVISION FOR HIS PEOPLE.

Many of the verses we have just looked at are designed for the comfort of the Lord's people, but in addition to those look at verse 16. What will it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, but lose his own soul? The wicked do not realize that a man's life does not consist of what he possesses in the way of material things. The wicked have never stopped to think that a man can be rich in this world's good, but not rich toward God. But it is riches toward God that will matter in eternity, not how large a man's bank account might be. Follow verse 16 with verse 18.

Read verse 19.

And then look at verse 22.

Derek Kidner spoke of much of the help that the Lord gives His people as "hidden help." I don't know exactly what he meant by that, but perhaps it was that the Lord often works in providential ways. Only eternity will reveal to us how many times the Lord has protected us from harm, or how our circumstances have proven to hold great blessings for us when it was in the hearts of some to see to it that we were harmed. How gracious God has been to give us these insights into the two separate ways that men take, and at the same time that He has inclined us to turn to righteousness rather than to wickedness. Every righteous person can look back upon his own life and in retrospect can see those times when God has intervened often in ordinary ways to turn us into the right way and away from the wrong.

So I trust that you and I can profit from these three points that are so clear when we gather together the message of God in this Psalm.

But now there are four verses which I have not included as yet, the last four verse in this section which I have chosen for my text for this service. I am speaking about verses 23, 24, 25, and 26. In these verses we have:

IV. THE TESTIMONY OF DAVID (Psa. 37:23-26).

As I have said before, here David was combining truth that had been revealed to him by the Lord, but he was also including his testimony that the Lord is always faithful to His Word, and faithful to His people.

We often have experiences where we are confused. Troubles may come our way one after another. As far as we are concerned, special answers to special requests are not being given. Faith is tested, and we may even have the feeling that we have been forsaken. This is when we are looking at the things that we can see. But we need to remind ourselves time and time again that we do not judge things on the basis of what we can see. When a wicked man does that he will go farther and farther into his wickedness, and bring greater and greater judgment upon himself. No, we are to look at the things which we cannot see. We look at the promises of God even though for the present at least we cannot see the answers. We look at the character of God, and realize anew that God is always faithful, always able to do even more than we are asking Him to do. We go to the Word, and feed our souls on the promises of Scripture. *But it is also very helpful when we see, especially in the Scriptures, how others have been in difficult, perhaps hopeless situations, only to learn as they have trusted, and delighted, and committed, and rested, and waited, that God has been*

abundantly faithful to His promises which He has made to His people.

So what do we learn here?

First, in verse 23, that our lives, down to the very steps we take, have been ordered by the Lord. And most of our translations take the position that the second part of verse 23 is that the Lord is the One Who delights in what He has ordained for us. He has planned the best, and He would not change anything which He has done.

Second, in verse 24, David having looked first at a sovereign God, looks then as mortal man. He may be saved, but he is not yet perfect. He falls, and you would think that all of the Lord's plans for him are ruined. *But they are not! Why?* Because the Lord upholdeth him with His hand. This does not mean that the Lord grabs our hands when we are about to fall, but it means that the Lord has a hold of our hands all of the time.

David was not talking about a fall into immorality of some kind, but a failure to trust the Lord and facing the consequences of such distrust.

Illus: Jim Rayburn helping his daughter across a shallow stream as she stepped on rocks. She slipped, but she did not fall because he was holding her by the hand.

Third, in verse 25, David was speaking, not as a young man, nor as a babe in the Lord, but as one who had walked with the Lord for many, many years. He had not only his own experience with the Lord to draw from, but also what he had learned from the experience of others. And he had *never* "seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Even many of David's Psalms indicate that he felt abandoned by the Lord. He cried out for help. So he did not mean here that the people of God don't go through hard times and severe trials, but he was telling us the ultimate outcome. He had never seen the Lord "forsake" His people. We may not always have the consciousness of His presence, but He is always there. His help always comes at the right times, and in the right ways.

And then in verse 26 we see the effect that the faithfulness of God has in the life of the one who trusts, and delights, and commits, and rests, and waits. "He is ever merciful, and lendeth" (or gives), and what is the best of all as far as this life is concerned, "his seed is blessed." What seems to be the thought here?

It seems that David was pointing out that the way we can benefit our immediate family the best, and have the blessing extend on to our grandchildren, and even beyond, is for us to trust, and delight, and commit, and rest, and wait.

Concl: We get tired of the wickedness all around us, and of the ways in which wicked seems almost always to prevail. We cry out to God for His mercy, but it all seems in vain. But when we read a Psalm like Psalm 37 we realize that it is not in vain that we trust the Lord. It never has been in vain, and it never will be in vain. In fact, there is no other way to go.

So let us join the saints of the past. God's record is even greater now than it was when David wrote this Psalm. Righteousness will prevail. The wicked are the losers, and if their eyes are not opened to the truth before they die, they will be losers for all eternity. But the way of blessing is to walk with the Lord, and trust Him when it seems to be in vain, knowing that God will not forget us, nor will He forget His promises. And we can say beyond that, that He will never let us out of His sight nor take His hand away from us. How blessed we are! And how thankful we should be that the living God is our God, and that He is ours and we are His, forever!

TWO MEN, TWO WAYS, TWO RESULTS

Psalm 37:27-40

Intro: This whole Psalm is a contrast between the wicked and the righteous, their different ways of life, and their destinies, or what will ultimately happen to them. From a human point of view it often seems like the wicked who choose to live without God, have the best way. But that is not at all the case. However, that is where the Word of God becomes valuable beyond any human calculation.

Perhaps you remember Psalm 73, a psalm written by Asaph, in which he describes how close he came to disaster in his own life when he considered the prosperity of the wicked, and was tempted to go there way. He began the Psalm with these words:

- 1 Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.
- 2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.
- 3 For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked (Psa. 73:1-3).

I won't take the time to read the whole Psalm, but I want to call your attention to what Asaph wrote beginning with verse 17. He said,

- 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.
- 20 As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.
- 21 Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.
- 22 So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee (Psa. 73:17-22).

He concluded with this verse:

- But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works (Psa. 73:28).

This is very similar to what David was doing in Psalm 37. And this is why Derek Kidner gave the last verses of this Psalm the title, "the Long View." By this he meant, *Where does the way of the wicked lead? And the only place that you can find the answer to that question, is in the Word of God.* Most people don't think about where the path they are taking is going to lead them, and uncounted numbers of people never find out until

it is too late. The best place to learn about sin is the Bible. In fact, it is the only place except as we find this subject discussed in books written by godly people who are seeking to explain the Bible. The Bible gives us a true view of the present, and it also helps us to understand the future.

Let me attempt to summarize for you what David said in this Psalm. This Psalm is good for all of us, but let me emphasize that this is a Psalm which young people must not overlook. It will protect you from many a heart-ache and many a regret.

As we come to these final verses I want you to notice that David indicates that every person in the world falls into just one of two categories, and only two. I will describe the main terms that he used in just a moment, but I want you to see that there are only two kinds of persons in all of the world.

I. THE TWO PERSONS.

He used various terms to describe them, but the two that seem to be most prominent are the terms "righteous" and "wicked." But let me point out in these last verses how the two ways are described.

Verses 27 through 29 indicate that David was taking "the Long View." Notice the words "forevermore" and "for ever" in these three verses. Sin may provide certain pleasures "for a season" (Heb. 11:25), but the season is so short, and the price is so high, that it is not worth the cost. And so instead of sinning, the Word tells us that we are to "depart from evil, and," on the other hand, "do good." And *doing good* in Scripture always means doing what is pleasing to God. And doing good is always a safeguard against sin and the troubles which sin leads to.

Including verse 29 the righteous are described in verses 29 through 31.

Then in verses 32 he gave us a picture of the wicked.

In verse 33 and 34 we have a promise regarding the righteous, and what the righteous should do in the light of the promise.

In verses 35 and 36 he returned to the wicked.

In verses 37 and 38 he spoke of "the end" of each of these two men.

Then the Psalm concludes by David's explanation as to the present provision that the Lord makes for His people.

Now let us look at these terms, "righteous" and "wicked."

These are terms which describe people as God sees them. A righteous person in the OT was exactly the same as a righteous person in the NT. He or she was a person who knew the Lord, one who had been saved from the penalty of sin, and declared to be righteous before God. And it is just because his relationship with God is right that he or she is capable of doing what is good and right in God's sight. From a practical viewpoint, a person is righteous when he seeks to please God.

The wicked person, on the other hand, is not a person who is as bad as he can possibly be, but he is a person who does not know the Lord and one whose life is all wrong in God's sight. Nothing that he does, even though in many respects in human eyes he could be considered a moral person, yet before God he is wicked.

All of us are in either one of these categories or the other. And every person we know can be classified in the same way. These are not our classifications, but they are God's. The wicked person is just like he was born into the world; the righteous person has been changed by the power and grace of God.

You will find these contrasts throughout this psalm, but we are concerned mainly about the different results each of these will face in the final outcome.

But now let us contrast

II. THE TWO WAYS OF THESE TWO PERSONS.

First, let's look at the righteous person.

A. The righteous person.

First, he seeks to avoid sin, and wants to do what is right in God's sight. We see this in verse 27.

Second, the Lord will never forsake him; he is kept "for ever." See this in verse 28.

Third, he speaks a wisdom that is not of this world. He is discerning between good and evil. And because the Word of God is in his heart, his steps are secure. See this in verses 30 and 31.

Fourth, he knows that he can patiently trust in the Lord, and that this is the way that leads to ever increasing blessing. This is the meaning of verse 34.

Fifth, he has the peace of God in his heart. This is what we learn from verse 37.

And sixth, in verses 39 and 40 we see that for the righteous person he has the Lord as his security, his strength for his times of trouble, his helper in every time of need. All he needs to do is to trust the Lord and he will find that the Lord is always faithful.

But now let us look at

B. The wicked person.

Verse 32 tells us that he hates righteousness, and seeks to slay a righteous person. Never was this more evident than in the way in which wicked religious men sought to kill the Lord Jesus Christ, and finally succeeded.

Verse 35 tells us that the wicked is deceived by his great power and prosperity, but yet he dies and all that he had trusted in does him no good. He might live like he was going to live forever, but the one thing that he is not prepared for is death.

Not as much is said about the wicked as David said in this section about the righteous, but if you will stop to think of all that is included between the two points that are made in verses 32 and 35, you will see that this really is a picture of the way most people live, and finally die, here on the earth. They know that there is another way, but they are not interested in hearing about it, nor in having anything to do with it. And so they continue on in their own way until they are finally taken in death.

But now we are thinking about "the Long View" of these two kinds of people, and what the results are that are ahead of each of them.

III. THE RESULTS AWAITING THESE TWO PERSONS.

First, let us take the righteous person.

A. The results ahead of the righteous person.

The first is given to us in verse 27. He will live forever! And in verse 28 we see that he will be preserved so that he will be able to enjoy all that the Lord has provided for him.

And God's promise concerning the land will be fulfilled. See verse 29.

God made a specific promise to the children of Abraham concerning the land He promised to give them, from which the Messiah would reign over the whole earth. It looks now like this world belongs to the Devil. Indeed he is the God of this world. But in taking "the Long View" we see that the Lord will not forget His promises nor His purposes. Politicians today have a global strategy, but all of their efforts will come to naught. The righteous can be sure that the purposes of God will ultimately be fulfilled exactly as God promised that they would be. The days is coming when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the seas.

In verse 34 we see this promise repeated.

The peace which the righteous experience in a measure now, will be a lasting heritage of all who know the Lord.

Verses 39 and 40 serve to underline and emphasize the truth of verse 28.

But what about the wicked?

B. The results awaiting the wicked.

See the last statement of verse 28. Then see the last part of verse 34. And see the same ominous statement at the end of verse 38. And it is the same word in every verse. They will be cut off from God. They will be cut off from peace. They will be cut off from life, and they will experience the torments of hell for all eternity.

This is hard for us to comprehend, but that is because we do not sufficiently understand the holiness of God, nor the awfulness of sin in God's sight. Man is perfectly satisfied if he has what he wants in the present, but he fails to take into account what we learn from the Word of God that a

day of judgment is coming in which men will stand before God.

Concl: It would be good for us now to go back over the Psalm to read from the very first how God portrays the two kinds of people in the earth. And it is hard to see how anyone with the facts of Scripture before him, would pursue the way of the wicked, and ignore the need to be righteous before God. In David's day righteousness was provided on the basis of a sacrifice that would be offered in the future, which now has been offered by our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is only in Christ that anyone can possibly be declared righteous before God, and thus be enabled to live righteously in God's sight.

Let me conclude by reading to you a story, a parable, which the Lord Jesus told while He was here on earth, which illustrates the contrast that is presented to us in Psa. 37.

Read Luke 16:19-31.