

THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Psalm 37

Intro: As most of you know for the past seventeen weeks I have been speaking on the Psalms from which many of us have memorized verses in the past twelve weeks. Some Psalms we memorized in full; but with others we memorized less than the complete Psalm. Today I come to the last of the Psalms from which memorized only the first seven verses. Each assignment has been arranged so that if some did not choose to memorize all seven verses in the assignment, they could choose to memorize three verses from the from the seven, or only one verse each week. Our object has been to get everyone that we possibly could to memorize some. And, as we have heard each year, people have been blessed, and often greatly blessed, by however many verses they have memorized, whether one, or three, or seven verses. We have done this each year since Trinity Bible Church was started. And we hope that many who have done the memory work, will continue to memorize on their own. Memorizing Scripture is a great aid to meditating on the Word of God.

Our last assignment for this year was Psalm 37, verses 1 through 7. We did not have the time to do all forty verses, but if we had, that would have been even a greater blessing for us. As I have been preaching on these Psalms on Sunday morning, I have often gone on to include all of the verses of the Psalm; with others I have just included what we have memorized. However, I have been reading all of Psalm 37 over and over in preparation for this morning in order to get the message of this Psalm more clearly fixed in my own mind and heart.

In doing so, I have been attracted to one word that is used four times in this Psalm. It is the word, “way,” and you will see it in verses 5, 7, 23, and 34. And then as I continued my search I discovered that the word “conversation” at the end of verse 14 is the same word in the Hebrew, and so it could be translated “way” also. It is the Hebrew word for a road, but more especially it speaks of the way you walk on that road. And so it is a word which speaks of the way a person lives. In English we speak of a person’s “way of life.” We speak of life as being a journey that all of us are taking. It includes not only what we do, but it includes the way we think, the goals we set for ourselves. It identifies what we are.

As I continued to think about this, I remembered that the word “way” was

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in the first Psalm that we memorized, and it is Psalm 1 where the Psalmist spoke of two ways. First of all, the Psalmist in verse 1 said that true happiness is not found by the person who “standeth in the way of sinners.” And then when your eye runs down to the last verse of Psalm 1 you will see that the Psalmist said, “For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.” Derek Kidner, a Hebrew scholar says that for God to know the way of the righteous means much more than just the God is informed as to what it is, but that He cares for such a person, and that He identifies Himself with such a person. (And by the way, the Hebrew word for “way” is *derek*, which is Dr. Kidner’s first name.)

So what Psalm 1 teaches us about “the way,” is that with all of the different ways that people live in the world, they can all be summed up under two headings. They are “the way of the righteous,” and “the way of the ungodly.” A person who lives in a righteous way, is a person who knows God and wants to please God. On the other hand, “the way of the ungodly” describes a person who does not know God and who therefore is not concerned in his life by what is pleasing to God or displeasing to Him. All of us are in one or the other of these two categories; there is no third one. There is a wide difference between ungodly people. Ungodly people can be kind people. They can do a lot of good things. They can be very respected people. But they don’t know God, or Jesus Christ the Son of God, and so their purpose in life is not to please God. On the other hand, you often will be able to see faults in the lives of Christians, but that is not the way they live. God said through the prophet Isaiah a lot about man’s ways and His ways, using the same word that we are discussing in the Psalms. Many of you know Isaiah 53:6 where we find this same word which speaks of how people live as being distinct from what is pleasing to God. Let me read it for you:

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

And then if you read on to Isaiah 55 you will find these words:

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isa. 55:7-9).

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Now what does all of this mean? What does this all add up to? It means that we show who we are by the way we live. You ask many people if they are Christians, and they will say, "Yes." But when you look at the way they live, the evidence is just not there. They may be good people as we look at their lives, but they never talk about God. They never thank God for the forgiveness of their sins. They never go to a church where they can be with God's people and where they can sit under the teaching of the Word of God. They never make their decisions in life on the basis of what is pleasing to God, as opposed to what is displeasing to God. They may say that when they die they are going to heaven, but they can't give you any reason for such a hope. If a person really knows Jesus Christ as his, or her, Savior, you are going to be able to see the results of their faith in the way that they live. The Bible says,

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

We have been studying Romans in our Sunday School classes. In Romans 6:4 we read these words about a real Christian:

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Does that describe you? It doesn't mean that we are perfect, but it does mean that by trusting the Lord Jesus Christ we have been changed from living our way, man's way, the world's way, to living God's way. We aren't perfect, but we are different from what we used to be, or we are not saved.

Just today in our SS classes we had those two wonderful verses which are found at the beginning of chapter 12. Do those verses strike a responsive chord in your heart? Is that the way you really want to live? Let me read them for you just in case you weren't here for SS this mornig:

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom. 12:1-2).

This is God's will for all of us. This is the way a Christian is to live. And this is where the Bible is so extremely important for all of us because *it*

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tells us how to live God's way! That's the reason that we here at Trinity love to read the Bible. We love to teach the Bible, and we love to hear it taught. We are not in the entertainment business. We are not here to tickle people's ears by trying to convince them that everything is OK when it definitely isn't. But we know what people need to hear, and we find it on the pages of Scripture.

Now I have taken my subject for this morning from the last verse of Psalm 1, and given it to Psalm 37. As we look at Psalm 37 we are going to learn how we are going to show each other and everybody else who knows us what is God's way for us to live. But you can't live like the Bible tells us to live until you have eternal life, and the only way you can be forgiven of your sins and have eternal life is, first of all, by trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. This is a subject of such major importance that God sent His only begotten Son into the world as a Man that He might die as a substitute for you and me, taking on himself the penalty of our sins that should have fallen on us that we might be forgiven and be brought into the family of God. We are born into God's family. Our way is different now, and far better than any of us could have imagined. But we need to learn about it, and how to live it. That is what the Bible has been given to us for. That is why King David wrote Psalm 37.

Look with me, first of all, at verse 5. (READ.)

I am starting here because it has to do with "thy way," or your way, the way you and I are to live the life that we need to live to satisfy ourselves that we know the Lord, and to show others that we know the Lord and that He has made a difference in our lives, and to glorify God by living to please Him. And we are going to find that pleasing the Lord is what gives us the greatest joy that it is possible to have in this life.

So from verse 5, and verses 3 and 4 before verse 5 tell us that the unique feature about learning to walk in this new way is by realizing that the Christian life is basically a life in which we enjoy a personal relationship with the LORD. And remember that Dr. Varner taught us that LORD all in caps tells us that King David was speaking of God as Jehovah, the ever-living and eternal God Who is the LORD of heaven and earth.

One of the Psalms which I read this past week was Psalm 97. And I floated through that day that I read it on what I was told in the very first verse. It says,

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The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof (Psa. 97:1).

It is hard for us to comprehend, but the LORD Whom David knew is exactly the same LORD that you and I know, and He hasn't change one little bit in the 3,000 years that have come and gone since King David was here on earth like we are today. He reigns! You can't see Him, but He is the One Who is in charge of the whole universe! Nobody can challenge Him, or overrule Him. He alone is sovereign. So there is a lot for us to learn in learning God's ways, but He knows how to teach us, and He will teach us.

To commit our way to the LORD means to roll the whole burden on Him. It is a word which means the same as to trust Him. He has taken us out of the old way, and brought us into the new way, His way. This is His plan, not ours, and, as King David said here in verse 5, "He shall bring it to pass. So we know as we begin in this new life, this new way of living, where we are no longer to put ourselves first, but to put the Lord first, the Lord is the One Who is going to see that we live in this new way. So we are guaranteed success at the very beginning. We can fail, and we do fail, but He cannot fail because He is God! Read this verse placing the emphasis on the LORD just where it has to be. "Commit thy way **unto the Lord**; trust also **in Him**; and **He** shall bring it to pass."

I like Glenn Beck's emphasis on Faith, Hope, and Love. But I wish he would tell us Who it is that we are to have faith in, and what it is that we are to hope for, and Who it is that we are to love. We are to have faith in God and in His Son Jesus Christ. We hope in their promises. And we are to love the Lord with all of our heart and soul and strength and mind. And then to love others as we love ourselves. We have no prospect for the many blessings that we need to walk in this new way except in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

But now let jump back to verse 1.

Verses 1 and 2 are expressive of where most people are with respect to the world and the old way of living when we first come to Christ. Spiritually we are like the blind man was physically who was born blind, and the Lord gave him sight. He couldn't answer all of the questions that the Jews were asking him, but he said this, "whereas I was blind, now I see."

When the Lord opens our eyes to see the defilement and hopelessness of

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the old way, we see the world as we have never seen it before. And it tends to make us fret. King David used the word “fret” two more times in this Psalm. See it here, and in verses 7 and 8. And it is the same verb in all three places. (Read.) All three are negative, *i.e.*, “fret not.” To fret is to be so stirred up, so angered, so incensed, so stirred up that one would say the wrong thing, or even do the wrong thing. “Envious” can mean *zealous* in the wrong way, to try to do something to hurt “the workers of iniquity.” It means to get back at them in some way, even to the point of bodily harm. Focusing too much on the people of the world can cause us to dishonor the Lord by our reaction toward those who once deceived us. Apply this also to verses 7 and 8. We need to remember that God has told us in His Word that “vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.” See Romans 12:17-21:

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. [See Deut. 32:35.]

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Often in our attempt to help, we only make matters worse. A missionary friend of mine once said, “It is wonderful to be able to speak in several languages, but it is even better to learn to be quiet in one.” Again we need to remember what we have already seen, that God’s ways are not our ways, and we even as new Christians need to learn to do things in God’s ways. This is one of the most basic things in learning to walk on new paths. The last verses of Romans 12 are verses we need to memorize and then remember, and obey. If we would keep in mind the destiny of those who live in the ways of the world, as we learn from verse 2, our hearts would be filled with compassion toward those who walk in the way of the ungodly, and so face the terrible prospect of perishing in an eternal hell.

Remember that twice in Proverbs, Solomon said, “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). Repetition in Scripture is always for emphasis.