

Title: **PRECEPTS FOR LIFE**

Text: Psalm 37:1-40

Subject: *God's Gracious Precepts for Life*

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Tape # Z-89b

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PSALM 37

A Psalm of David

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.
3. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.
4. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.
5. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.
6. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.
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.
8. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.

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9. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.
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.
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.
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.
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.
21. ¶ The wicked borroweth, and payeth not

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- 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.
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.
29. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.
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.
32. The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.
33. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.
34. ¶ Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked

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- are cut off, thou shalt see 38. But the transgressors
it. shall be destroyed
35. I have seen the wicked together: the end of the
in great power, and wicked shall be cut off.
spreading himself like a 39. But the salvation of the
green bay tree. righteous is of the LORD:
36. Yet he passed away, he is their strength in the
and, lo, he was not: yea, I time of trouble.
sought him, but he could 40. And the LORD shall
not be found. help them, and deliver
37. Mark the perfect man, them: he shall deliver
and behold the upright: them from the wicked,
for the end of that man is and save them, because
peace. they trust in him.

INTRODUCTION

My subject tonight is **PRECEPTS FOR LIFE**. I do not often talk about or try to tell people how they ought to live. I do not pretend to know the answers to the questions that often confront people who seek to live for the glory of God in this world. And I certainly do not, and will not ever,

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bring out the whip of the law to beat you into the proper religious orders that men invent and seek to impose upon you. I leave it to free men and women to serve the Lord God freely, as you are directed by his Spirit and his Word.

- Seek the glory of God.
- Seek the will of God.
- Seek that which is good for God's elect.

“Whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.” I lay no other rule or law before you than *“the love of Christ that constraineth”* all who are born of God to walk in the light as he is in the light.

But here in Psalm 37, I am going to show you eight **PRECEPTS FOR LIFE**. I believe that it would be great blessing to you if you will follow me through this Psalm, marking these eight great precepts for life. Here are eight **Divinely Inspired guidelines** for you who know Christ, for you who love the gospel and who rest in our blessed Redeemer.

This is a Psalm of David. He wrote it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,”* (God breathed) as the Scripture says. **The time of the writing of this Psalm is revealed in verse 25.** — *“I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.”* David

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said, — “*I have been young and now am old.*” So, David wrote this Psalm in his old age, in his mature years.

This 37th Psalm is very similar to Psalm 73. Like Psalm 73, Psalm 37 deals with the prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions, poverty, and persecutions God’s elect experience in this world. **Have you ever thought about that, how the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer?** The wicked live in luxury and ease while many of God’s saints are afflicted, suffer, live in poverty, and do without those things other men call the very necessities of life. God’s children love God and love His Word and are faithful to the Gospel. Wicked men are blasphemous, despise God, and have no interest in the Gospel. Yet, it seems like everything they touch turns to gold. That is what David talks about in this blessed piece of heavenly poetry, here in Psalm 37. Here are some of the complaints and questions which were raised and answered in this Psalm:

The wicked seem to prosper and succeed. And they do. There is no denying that. The wealthier a man is, usually, the more vile, blasphemous, and wicked he is. That is true in many cases; you know it and I know it. Wicked men prosper and succeed while they despise, deny, and hate God.

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Then David raises another issue. — **The true believer, the true child of God is unknown and is unrecognized.**

Generally, the people of God are insignificant, poor, and have very little influence. They rarely amount to much in the eyes of men. No one regards them as being important. They are unknown, unrecognized, and are not influential.

The wicked ridicule God's people. They ridicule God's Word. And they ridicule the sacrifice of Christ. They plot and scheme against the truth. They mistreat the people of God, and want all mention of God taken off of money, out of the Pledge of Allegiance, out of the schools and everywhere else. They just do not want God around. They want freedom, not of religion, but freedom from religion.

That's not all. — **The wicked take advantage of poor people.** Some wicked, religious people take advantage of poor people, too. Yet, they continue to get richer, more prosperous and fatter. That is how the Word of God describes them. — Fat cats who fatten themselves upon the poor!

These wicked ones, unbelievers, are by far the great majority. Most people do not know God and do not believe God. Those who do believe God are those who are like a small flock in a great wilderness of trouble, trial, and sin.

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In light of all this, David, wrote this Psalm under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as a man mature in years and rich in experience of God's rich grace, and rich in faith.

David gives us eight, great, precepts, or guideline for believers. I would like for you to follow along in your Bible as I point these eight great precepts.

1. **FRET NOT**

The first precept is found in Psalm 37:1; David says, — *"Fret not thyself because of these evildoers; neither be thou envious of the workers of iniquity."* Don't burn with jealousy; when you see these wicked men, these blasphemers who deny God and hate the Gospel. Don't envy them or get angry with them.

When you see them prosper in good health, driving expensive cars, living in palatial homes, and scarcely working, don't envy them and don't get angry with them.

Do not be jealous of them for these two reasons.

First, David says, "**They shall soon be cut off.**" That's right; *"They shall be cut down as grass; they shall wither as the green herb. Their foot shall slide in God's own time."* Do not envy them. — *"They are going to be cut down like mown grass and wither like a green herb."*

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Second, do not be envious of these wicked people because **they have all that they will ever have.** It is true that many of them spend their days on earth in ease and in luxury. But “*they shall soon be cut off.*” They will not only be cut off from this life but also from eternal life. They will not only be cut off from men but they will be cut off from God.

Were it not for God’s grace, we would be just like them.

Do you know that? Don’t ever forget it. That ought to help us not to be angry with them. The fact that they soon shall be cut off, the fact that this is all that they will ever have in this life ought to keep us from being jealous or envious of any evil, wicked, man who does not know God. Only by God’s grace are we not like them.

Do not envy the wicked. God will deal with them. Do not be angry against them. Do not waste your time with envy and jealousy. God is fattening them for the slaughter.

(Psalms 73:3, 17-19) “For I was envious at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked.... — ...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,

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as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.”

(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:”

The Lord God has set them in slippery places; and they shall slide in due time. God has set the world in their heart to destroy them. Why would we envy them and fret ourselves because of them. Eternity is ours!

2. **TRUST THE LORD**

In verse 3, David gives us a second precept for life. — “*Trust in the Lord.*” Trust not in riches. Riches are no foundation. Trust not in the arm of the flesh. The arm of the flesh is no foundation. Trust in the Lord. — “*Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh from the Lord.*”

(Proverbs 3:5-6) “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

Temporal, material, physical things will soon fade away. They shall soon be gone. They are not worth the time that it

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takes you to get them or to accomplish them. These things are nothing but soap bubbles.

The grace of God is forever. — “*The fashion of this world fadeth away.*” These clothes that I have on will rot and decay; but the “*Word of God abideth forever.*” The grace of God endures forever. The mercy of God is forever.

Trust in the Lord. Trust not in these riches. Trust not the arm of the flesh. Do not trust in the power or strength of men. They will fail. God never fails.

Trust Him for pardon, righteousness, and salvation. David wrote in Psalm 103, — “*Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me, bless His Holy name, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who satisfieth thy mouth with good things.*” He does all this for me. Men do not do this for me. God does.

Trust the Lord for daily provisions. — “*Give us this day our daily bread.*”

Trust the Lord for Divine protection. — “*He will give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways.*”

Trust the Lord for His good providence. Abraham did and he is our pattern of faith. — “*Abraham believed God*

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and it was counted him for righteousness.” He didn’t know where he was going. The Lord told him to get out of his father’s house and go to a land that He would show him. He believed God even though he didn’t know where he was going. God told him when he was 100 years old that he was going to have a son. Abraham believed God again, even though he didn’t know how God would do what He promised. God told him to take that boy and sacrifice him on a mountain as a sin-offering. Not knowing why, he went. Abraham didn’t question the Lord. He trusted the Lord.

I wish I could learn that, don’t you? Don’t question the Lord. Trust the Lord. Don’t find fault with God’s good providence. Trust Him.

Did you ever say that to your children when they were growing up? Did you ever say, “Trust me”? You probably did, and probably added, “Don’t question me.” If I expect my child to trust me, how I can not trust my God? We can trust our Heavenly Father, who is infinite in his goodness, grace, wisdom and power. I often fail and make horrible mistakes. He never does. *“He never fails.”* We can trust Him.

3. **DELIGHT THYSELF**

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The third precept is in verse 4. — *“Delight thyself in the Lord and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”* *“Delight thyself in the Lord.”* The believer is exhorted not to fret but is exhorted to trust the Lord.

He is exhorted not only to *“fret not”* but also to *“trust the Lord”* and rejoice in the Lord. That is what Paul said. — *“I have learned in whatever state I am in, therewith to be content.”* He said, *“I know how to abound; I know how to be abased, but I delight in the Lord.”* — *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, Rejoice.”*

Paul was in prison, writing to the church at Philippi. In the four chapters of that instructive epistle he used the word *“rejoice”* ten times. Psalm 1:2 tells us that a righteous man is one whose *“delight is in the Law of the Lord.”* That man who is planted by the river of the water of life, who *“bringeth forth his fruit in his season,”* — *“His delight is in the Law of the Lord.”*

In Psalm 40, our blessed Christ says; *“I delight to thy will O God.”* **Psalm 94:19** says, *“Thy mercy and thy comfort delight my soul.”* **Psalm 119:24** says, *“The Word of God is my delight.”* **Song of Solomon 2:3** proclaims, *“I sat down under His shadow with great delight.”* **Isaiah 58:2** says, *“I take great delight in approaching the Lord God.”*

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Someone once said, “The presence of the Lord and the promises of His Word make a mighty soft pillow when a man is dying; but the way of the transgressor is hard.”

The Scripture says, “*Blessed is the man who delights himself in the Lord.*” You do not find delight in jewelry, fine clothes, big houses, influence, prestige, power, and position in this world. All that will soon all pass away. You won’t be dead five years and people will be saying, “George who?”

Let me ask you this; who was John Kerry’s running-mate when he ran for president against President Bush just a years ago? He was on the ticket as the vice-president of the United States. Most people don’t even know who he was. Most people don’t even know who the vice-president of the United States is now let alone someone who ran for vice president just a few years ago.

You and I will not be gone five days before people will hear our names and ask, “Who was he?” They won’t ask who you are in glory if your name is written in the Book of Life. The things of earth and time just don’t amount to much. I don’t know why we think they do.

(2 Corinthians 4:17-5:1) “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more

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exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; ¹⁸ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal. ^{5:1 ¶} For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

4. COMMIT THY WAY

Psalm 37:5 gives you the fourth precept. — “*Commit thy way unto the Lord. Trust also in him and He will bring it to pass.*” — “*Cast all your care on Him; He careth for you.*” Cast away your anxiety, worry, and fear; and resign your will, your life, and your family to His care. — “*He careth for you.*”

You know, the farmer teaches us a lesson along this line, this committing ourselves unto the Lord; “*He will bring it to pass.*” The farmer goes out and plows the field. He disks the field, and tears it up. He lays off rows in the field, plants his seed, and covers it up.

Now, what does he do? He doesn’t do anything except wait on the Lord. That seed is committed to that ground looking

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to the Lord of the harvest to give it life, make it bud and to bring it forth.

This is what David is saying, “*Commit your way unto the Lord,*” your salvation, your present, your future, and your family, to the Lord God. Just take it to the Lord as the old hymn writer said, “and leave it there.”

“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,

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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."

That is what I mean when I say, "*Commit thy way unto the Lord.*" Did you leave your burden there? He will bring it to pass.

5. **REST**

Fifth, look at verse 7. Mark this down. — "*Rest in the Lord.*" We are told to trust in the Lord. We are told to commit our way unto the Lord, and now "*Rest.*" That is what I am talking about when I say, "Leave it there."

"*Trust the Lord.*" We trust the Lord. Yet we act like we don't. We are fretting, worrying, and uneasy. We are just beside ourselves. We are a bundle of nerves; He said, "*Rest.*" Trust the Lord; commit your ways to Him and rest. Wait patiently on the Lord.

There are so many promises in this Book, the Bible concerning the word "*rest.*" — "*He giveth His beloved rest*" (or sleep).— Our Lord said, "*Come unto Me and I will give you rest. Take your yoke upon you and learn of me*

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and you will find rest unto your souls.” — Paul talks about us “*ceasing from our labors and entering into His rest.*”

Our whole Gospel is a Gospel of rest. Our Gospel is not a Gospel of “do” it is a Gospel of “’tis done, the great transaction is done.” God says, “*Be still and know that I am God.*” When you were raising your children, did you ever have them fidgeting in your lap? You would say, “be still.” That is what God is saying to you and me. — “*Be still and know that I am God.*”

The soul of the unbeliever is like “*the troubled sea.*” The waves are dashing against and tossing the ship about. But “*he leadeth me beside still waters.*”

God killed Nadab and Abihu. Do you know who they were? These were sons of Aaron. They were the fellows “*who offered strange fire on the altar of God.*” Moses and Aaron were witnesses of this and God killed Nadab and Abihu. They were subjects led by Moses; but they were sons of Aaron. Moses told Aaron, “Aaron; the Lord killed those boys because of their blasphemy and their rebellion; they violated the altar of God, (the type of Christ). God killed them. Do you know what it says about Aaron? The Scripture says, “*He held his peace.*” We need to just hold our peace.

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That is what Eli did too, when the Lord killed his sons. He held his peace and said, “*It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good.*”

That is what Job did. He held his peace. Job said, “*The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*”

Oh, may God teach me to hold my peace! I can, if I “*rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. He will bring it to pass.*”

6. **CEASE FROM ANGER**

The sixth precept is found in verse 8. — “*Cease from anger; forsake wrath. Fret not thyself in any way to do evil.*” How difficult that is for us fallen, sinful wretches! Yet, this is a precept of Almighty God to His church, His people. This is God’s word to me and to you. — “*Cease from anger!*”

“*Cease from anger*” against God’s providence and against men. “*Cease from anger*” against God’s providence. God is the first cause of all things. We ought to cease to be angry with men, because they are only the second cause, the instruments of God’s providence.

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James 1:19-20 says, “*The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*” It never does. Our anger does not change any situation. It only makes things worse. — “Fret not thyself to get even; fret not thyself to get revenge,” for He says; “*vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*” He always repays. God always repays wickedness.

It would do us well to learn this and here is something that I want to work on. This is something that is helpful to me when I remember it. It would do us well to learn that **the battle against evil in any form is not our battle; it is God’s battle.** It is not my battle it is God’s battle.

Evil men are God’s enemies. David said, “*They are your enemies, O God.*” I will guarantee you that He will deal with His enemies. He told our Lord Jesus, “*Come and sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.*” Whose enemies is He talking about? He is talking about Christ’s enemies.

This battle is not my battle; it is God’s battle. I will be willing to be used in any way that He wants to use me for whatever purpose He wishes to use me. But this is His battle and wicked men, all of them, are His enemies. He will either save them by his grace or destroy them in his fury; but all that are incensed against him shall bow before

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him in shame. — *“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”*

You see; *“We wrestle not against flesh and blood.”* This is not a flesh and blood battle. *“We wrestle against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places.”* We don’t even know who they are. If there is a blow to be struck, God will have to strike it. You don’t know where to hit. You will hit some poor flesh. It won’t do you a bit of good because he is not the cause. He is the second cause.

7. DEPART AND DO GOOD

Here is the next precept, in verse 27. This is a double-precept: *“Depart from evil and do good.”*

- Depart from Evil Doctrine.
- Depart from Evil People.
- Depart from Evil Ways.

Paul deals with that in Romans 12:17. **He** says, — *“Recompense to no man evil for evil.”* Never try to get even. — *“Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible as much as lieth in you; live peaceably with all men.”*

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Try to live peacefully with your neighbors. Live peacefully with your in-laws. Live peacefully with all men. *“Dearly beloved; avenge not yourselves; give place to wrath. It is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”*

“Therefore, if your enemy hunger; feed him. If your enemy thirsts; give him a drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome with evil.” Don’t let evil overcome you. Don’t use their tactics, don’t use their ways. — *“Overcome evil with good.”*

8. **WAIT ON THE LORD**

Here is the eighth precept in verse 34. — *“Wait on the Lord; keep His way and He will exalt you to inherit the land.”* Stand in the way of Christ; *“and having done all of this to stand.”* Stay on the rock Christ Jesus. Keep to the Gospel of saving grace and wait on God.

Don’t try bind God with a time or an hour; just wait on Him. In due time He will bring it to pass.

(Lamentations 3:26) *“It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.”*

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(Isaiah 40:31) “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.”

“In heaven and earth and sky and seas
He executes His wise decrees,
And all His saints can in Him rest
For He does, I know, what is always best.

Wait then, my soul, patiently wait,
Prostrate before His Mercy Seat,
And through this dark and cloudy day,
Wait on the Lord and keep His way.”

His way is Christ! Keep His Way!

(Jude 1:21) “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

(Jude 1:24-25) “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, ²⁵ To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”