

“Seeing the Big Picture”
Psalm 37
(Preached at Trinity, August 8, 2010)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Sometimes as Christians we are guilty of tunnel vision. We see only what is immediately before our eyes while forgetting that God has declared both the beginning and the end.
Isaiah 46:9-10 – “Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”
2. Sometimes it would seem that the ungodly are excelling in this world while the righteous are suffering. But we don’t always see through the eyes of God.
Isaiah 55:8-9 – “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.”
3. **Psalm 37** is similar to **Psalm 1** in that there are two ways of life presented and there is a vast difference between the two.
 - A. These psalms are called wisdom psalms. David presents the way of the ungodly and the way of the Godly and encourages his readers not to become discouraged at the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous.
 - B. This psalm is not spoken to God as most of the psalms are. It is spoken directly to the reader.
 - C. We must trust in the infinite wisdom and purpose of God. God is working His purpose and we must never forget that He is working it for our good.
4. **Psalm 37** another acrostic psalm in which each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
The acrostic psalms are 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145
We aren’t quite sure what their purpose was. Perhaps to aid in memorization. Perhaps to aid in singing the psalms.
It is a reminder to us that the Bible wasn’t written in English which stresses the need for us to have a good English translation.
5. This psalm was written by David in his old age and thus reflects a lifetime of experience and wisdom. It’s my prayer that it will provide us with a wealth of wisdom as we study it.
6. As with most of the acrostic psalms this psalm is difficult to divide into sections. This will become very clear when we come to Psalm 119.
 - A. One approach to Psalm 37 might be to approach it as a series of proverbs to guide God’s people in life as they seek to understand their trials and difficulties while observing the prosperity of the wicked.
Spurgeon – “The Psalm can scarcely be divided into considerable sections. It resembles a chapter of the book of Proverbs, most of the verses being complete in themselves.”

- B. But we do find five loosely connected sections that contain some dominate themes. We'll examine the psalm in the light of these themes.
Verses 1-11 – David comforts God's people as they face the afflictions of life
Verses 12-15 – David considers the way of the wicked
Verses 16-24 – David contrasts the way of the wicked and way of the righteous
Verses 25-33 – David counsels God's people as an aged man of wisdom
Verses 34-40 – David concludes by setting before us the big picture
7. There is no way to make it through this psalm in a single sermon so I'm going to free us at the very beginning from the temptation to rush. May we take the time to savor this psalm.
- I. **Verses 1-11** – David comforts God's people as they face the afflictions of life
- A. David begins by comforting those who see the wicked faring well – **Verses 1-2**
Psalm 37:1 – “Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.”
1. To “fret” means to worry but this word for “fret” implies anger or intense agitation. Don't become angry over those who seem to be doing much better than you
 2. Don't be jealous of them
 - a. Are you ever jealous of the prosperity unbelievers?
Those who have great wealth – live in mansions, drive expensive cars
What about movie stars?
What about musicians?
 - b. What about when they get the promotion at work?
 - c. What about when they attract so many more friends?
 3. Don't forget the big picture
Psalm 37:2 – “For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.”
- B. David counsels us to keep our eyes upon God – **Verses 3-5**
1. He sets before us three imperatives: Trust, Delight, Commit
And with them three blessings
 2. Trust Him – regardless of what you see going on around you
 - a. Faith is the cure for envy, for fretting. Faith brings contentment – to trust God for the condition of your life.
 - b. Trust demands obeying Him – no matter what
“Trust in the LORD, and do good”
 - c. **The promise:** “so shalt thou dwell in the land”
 - d. This is one of the great themes of this Psalm – the focus upon inheriting the land - See 9, 11, 22, 29
 - e. The promises of the Old Covenant find their complete fulfillment in Christ in the New Covenant. The Promised Land finds full expression in our eternal home.
 - f. Jesus speaks of it in the Beatitudes
Matthew 5:5 – “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”
 - g. Those who trust Christ find eternal blessings that cannot compare with the temporal material gains of the wicked

3. “Delight thyself also in the Lord”
- a. Those who delight themselves in Christ find pure exquisite delight. The more we know Him the more we delight in Him. He is full of perfection. He pours His endless love upon those who delight in Him.
 - b. The delights of this world are an illusion. They make promises that they cannot keep. Why do so many wealthy people commit suicide?
 - c. Why are there so many people who have so much in worldly possessions who fight depression? I’m not talking about a clinical ailment. I’m talking about sheer unhappiness and discontent.
 - d. How do you delight more in Christ?
Back in **Psalm 32:11** David gave an imperative to be full of joy
Psalm 32:11 – “Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye *that are* upright in heart.”
(1) How can you command someone to be joyous?
(2) It can only happen as we fill our life with Christ
Casting aside all our idols and filling our loves with prayer, meditation, His Word.
 - e. **The promise:** “He shall give the desires of thine heart.”
When the carnal man reads this his mind floods with earthly things – the desires of his heart.
When Christ becomes your great delight you have everything!
Matthew 6:21 – “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”
And He will give you more. Have you ever marveled at some Christians who are so full of Christ? It is because they have found delight in Him and He fills them with the fullness of Himself.
4. “Commit thy way unto the LORD, trust also in Him.”
- a. By “committing” he means laying yourself open to Him.
(1) The Greek in the Septuagint refers to a “revealing or disclosure”
It means to lay yourself bare – it is a full resting upon Him and a full expressing of our heart to him in prayer.
(2) We “commit” ourselves unto God when we take our eyes off ourselves and our earthly condition. We quit leaning on our own wisdom and understanding.
We become people of prayer
 - b. **The promise** - “and he shall bring *it* to pass.”
The indication is God will relieve you of your anxiety. He will hear your prayer and grant you peace.
Philippians 4:6-7 – “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

- c. **Psalm 37:6** – “And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.”
As a further promise God will display your righteousness as bright as the sun.
Let the wicked boast of their earthly estate.
God’s people shine with the holiness of heaven.
- C. David gives several other places of comfort – **Verses 7-11**
1. **Verse 7** – Rest in the Lord and patiently wait upon Him.
 - a. Don’t fret about the wicked who prosper
 - b. Look at the big picture – God will bless you in due time.
 2. **Verse 8** – Cease from anger. Forsake wrath. Quit worrying
 3. **Verse 9** – Those who wait upon God shall inherit the earth
 4. **Verse 10** – Look at the big picture. In a short time the wicked will be no more.
 5. Be quiet, be still, don’t worry, trust!
 6. James Montgomery Boice said that **Verses 1-10** are the most direct exposition of the third beatitude in all of Scripture. They describe the quiet spirit of one who trusts in the Lord.
Psalm 37:11 – “But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”

Conclusion:

1. Remember, this is a Wisdom Psalm. God is teaching us from His infinite wisdom.
2. It is easy for us to have tunnel vision. It is easy for us to put all focus upon today and the problems of it and tomorrow and the possible problems.
3. David tells us, Trust Him, Delight yourself in Him, Commit yourself to Him
Keep your eye on the big picture.
 - a. What do you tell the parents who have just lost a child?
I remember several years ago a family lost all five of their children in a car wreck. Job suffered the loss of all of his beloved children.
It is essential to see the big picture – God’s purpose. His ways are always right and His purposes are always according to His infinite wisdom.
Trust Him, Delight yourself in Him, Commit yourself to Him
 - b. What do you tell someone who has had a family member murdered and the killer has just been acquitted?
Look at the big picture. God’s ways are perfect. Thought it may seem that the wicked are escaping judgment now their judgment will be sure.
Trust Him, Delight yourself in Him, Commit yourself to Him
Psalm 37:10 – “For yet a little while, and the wicked *shall not be*: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it *shall not be*.”
Psalm 37:13 – “The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming.”
 - c. What do you tell someone who has discovered that a long time employee has been embezzling thousands from the family business and it doesn’t look like the business will survive?
Trust Him, Delight yourself in Him, Commit yourself to Him

- d. What do you tell a middle aged lady whose lost husband has left her for a younger woman and she is faced with trying to support herself.
Trust Him, Delight yourself in Him, Commit yourself to Him
4. We have to remember every day has been planned according to God's infinite wisdom and each day fits perfectly into God's purpose.
5. Don't look at the condition of a man's life as indication of God's blessing.
Remember the rich man and Lazarus.
Luke 16:25 – "But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."
6. The wicked may seem like they are living a good life. It is only an illusion. The only good life is the life in Christ.
Psalms 37:1-2 – "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."

Trust Him, Delight yourself in Him, Commit yourself to Him