

"The Steps of a Good Man"

Psalm 37 - Read vs. 1-23

Remember, this is an acrostic psalm, with very similar form as the book of Proverbs where each two verses is its own context, and each of those verses start with a subsequent Hebrew letter.

A couple weeks ago we looked at the first four (4) verses and several of the initial imperatives for the child of God (the "good man" of verse twenty-three) to follow to deal with the stress of this life.

- "Fret not...neither be thou envious" - vs. 1-2
- "Trust in the LORD, and do good" - vs. 3
- "Delight thyself also in the LORD" - vs. 4

Part 2

We looked down through verse twenty-two (22) last week as we found several more helpful imperatives to help us deal with that stress.

- "Commit thy way unto the LORD" - vs. 5
- "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him" - vs. 6
- "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath" - vs. 8

I pointed out that we would divide this psalm into four sections, although every two verses, for the most part, is its own context or point.

I. INSTRUCTION FOR THE RIGHTEOUS - VS. 1-11

II. THE FATE OF THE WICKED AND THE RIGHTEOUS - VS. 12-22

III. THE FATE OF THE WICKED AND THE RIGHTEOUS – VS. 12-22

Part 3

This week we will begin in verse twenty-three and go through the end of the psalm.

IV. THE SECURITY OF THE RIGHTEOUS – VS. 23-31

A. Vs. 23-24 – Mem (מ) – God directs the steps of the righteous

There are wonderful blessings in this verse regarding “the good man” – the righteous.

The word “good” is italicized in this verse because it’s supplied by the translators for clarity. It’s there as an adjective for “man” because of the context both before and after which speaks of the righteous and good man.

1. His “steps” (rare Hebrew word that speaks of literal steps or paces a man takes) are used figuratively here referring to one’s walk in life. Those steps “are ordered by the LORD” – He is directing our very path and every step in that path, if we let Him. **The more right we are with Him, the more we will see those steps He lays out for us.**
2. “He delighteth in his way” – there are two viable meanings here: either the LORD delights in the way of the good man, or the good man delights in God’s direction. Just by virtue of word order in the first line, as well as from what follows, I am inclined to interpret the pronouns as “He (the good man) delighteth in His (the Lord’s)

way.” We should take delight in whatever God has planned for us and do His will heartily.

Colossians 3:23

²³ And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

3. “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down” – although the good man, the upright one, may (and often will) be subject to trials and temptations and will fall because of them, there is the promise here, as well as throughout Scripture, that he will never be forsaken or destroyed. As we’ve seen in two previous psalms (and one yet to come), we are under His protective wings.

Psalms 17:8

⁸ Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,

Psalms 36:7

⁷ How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

Psalms 91:4

⁴ He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

4. The reason we aren’t destroyed is because we are upheld “with his hand” – and He can never lose us, nor can we ever lose Him.

John 10:28-30

²⁸ And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

²⁹ My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

³⁰ I and my Father are one.

B. Vs. 25-26 - Nun (נ) - God's provision for His people

1. "I have been young, and now am old" - clearly David had lived a long life by this point and was making some observations about the path that Lord leads people to walk and His provisions for their journey.

a) The first observation he makes is an absolute rule (followed by a general rule). We know it's an absolute rule because there are other texts of Scripture that state it emphatically - "yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken." It may seem like God has forsaken at times, but He hasn't nor ever will.

Hebrews 13:5

⁵ Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

b) The second observation of verse twenty-five (25) is a general rule but there are exceptions. There is an old theological rule that translates as: "The corporal promises are to be understood with the exception of the cross [that is, the cross of suffering we may be called to bear] and chastisement."

I've made this comment several times in our study of the book of Psalms - that the general rule is what's given but there may be exceptions, as is the case here. Although there

are exceptions, in the end, when this life is over, there will never be another need or want.

2 Corinthians 4:8-10

⁸ We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

⁹ Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

¹⁰ Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

Philippians 4:11-12

¹¹ Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

¹² I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

2. Verse twenty-six (26) points back to verse twenty-three (23) and is speaking about the "good man," or the righteous one.

- a) "He is ever merciful" - already seen in verse twenty-one (21) speaking of the upright.
- b) "And lendeth" - verse twenty-one (21) uses the term giveth (synonymous parallels).
- c) "And his seed is blessed" - the descendants of a righteous man are blessed.

Several years ago the Christian Life and Faith magazine presented some unusual facts about two families. In 1677 an immoral man married a very

licentious woman. Nineteen hundred descendants came from the generations begun by that union. Of these, 771 were criminals, 250 were arrested for various offenses, 60 were thieves, and 39 were convicted for murder. Forty of the women were known to have venereal disease. These people spent a combined total of 1300 years behind bars and cost the State of New York nearly 3 million dollars.

The other family was the Edwards family. The third generation included Jonathan Edwards who was the great New England revival preacher and who became president of Princeton University. Of the 1,344 descendants, many were college presidents and professors. One hundred eighty-six became ministers of the gospel, and many others were active in their churches. Eighty-six were state senators, three were Congressmen, 30 judges, and one became Vice President of the United States. No reference was made of anyone spending time in jail or in the poorhouse. (The only exception to this was Aaron Bur.)

Not all children of good parents become useful citizens, nor do all the offspring of wicked people turn out bad. Yet the possibility of a child getting the right start in life is enhanced if he comes from a home where love prevails, the Bible is taught, and prayer is offered.

Father, Mother, when you live for the Lord, you provide a strong incentive for your children to

choose the Christian way of life. Parental example is extremely powerful – either for good or for evil.

C. Vs. 27-28a - Samech (ס) - Choosing good over evil

Verse twenty-eight (28) is divided between this point and the next. The subsequent Hebrew letter that follows the *samech* is the *ayin* which is found in the second half of verse twenty-eight (28), in the phrase, “they are preserved for ever.” This verse contains two stanzas, each having two lines, rather than the normal two-line or three-line stanzas that we see throughout this psalm.

There’s no effect on the point made in verses twenty-seven through twenty-nine (27-29) by this poetic structure – its value is simply for that structure. These four verses are given to one point – choosing good over evil.

1. “Depart from evil, and do good” – self-explanatory and simple enough to understand. This is what marks the “good man” of verse twenty-three (23), and is the summation of the psalm.
2. “And dwell for evermore” – speaking of dwelling in the land and goes back to verse three (3). I made this observation on that verse:

“The land” speaks of the Promised Land throughout the Old Testament, which is a type of the new life in Christ. To “dwell in the land” speaks to living a quiet and peaceful life, fully relying on the Lord to provide for whatever is needed. Points to the “good” spoken of in the conditional part of the verse.

3. "For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints" – part of God's love for His saints (seen as those that choose good over evil) is seen not only in never leaving nor forsaking them, but is also seen in defending them ("judgment") against the attacks from their enemies, the ultimate enemy being the devil.

1 John 2:1

¹ My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

D. Vs. 28b-29 - Ayin (ע) - The righteous are preserved forever

1. "They are preserved for ever" – speaking of the saints that the Lord loves and defends.
2. "But the seek of the wicked shall be cut off" – a similar sentiment that we've seen in previous verses of this psalm.
3. "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever" – again, principles we have seen before in this psalm. Speaks of national Israel during the Millennium ultimately, and metaphorically, speaks of the child of God today dwelling forever with the Lord.

Revelation 21:3-4

³ And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.⁴ And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither

sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Revelation 21:7

⁷ He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

E. Vs. 30-31 - Pe (פ) - The words and steps of the righteous

1. These verses teach a familiar truth as found in the Poetical Books, especially in the book of Proverbs.
2. Verse thirty (30) makes a statement of profound importance for the child of God today. We should be known for our language - our speech - in a good way. It should benefit those that hear us, lifting people up rather than tearing them down, whether we like them or not, whether they're saved or not.
3. Verse thirty-one (31) tells us why:
 - a) "Because the law of his God is in his heart" - by "the law" is meant the Word of God as a whole for us today.
 - b) "None of his steps shall slide" - if we want our path, or life, to be secure then we need to follow the directives of the Word of God. If we do, then we won't "slide" into the chaos that is around us.

We looked at something similar to this in our study of the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 2:1

¹ Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest

at any time we should let *them* slip.

- (1) "We should let them slip" – as a boat that gets loose of its mooring and slips adrift downstream. This can be considered in one of two ways, both end in the same destruction.

We can be the ones in the boat tied to the anchor of God's Word and if we're not careful, we can get loose of it and drift away.

Or the Word of God is the boat tied to us, and we simply aren't paying close enough attention to it and it drifts away from us.

V. THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF THE RIGHTEOUS – VS. 32-40

A. Vs. 32-33 – Tsade (צ) – The wicked plot, but God defends

These verses are straightforward and don't need much comment. The enemy ("wicked") will always watch us to see if we slip up so that they can accuse us, but we can be assured that the Lord will not abandon us to the enemy nor "condemn" us (because we are covered by the blood of Christ) when accused.

Romans 8:1

¹ *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

Romans 8:33-34

³³ Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. ³⁴ Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

B. Vs. 34 - (Qof) - (ק) - the righteous will inherit eternal victory

1. This verse goes back to verse nine (9) and restates the promise associated with waiting on the Lord to both guide us in life and defend us against the enemy.
2. It also restates that the wicked will be destroyed, and adds the statement, "thou shalt see it." This speaks both of the Israelites seeing the destruction of their enemies in the ages to come, ultimately at the Battle of Armageddon, as well as the believer knowing the wicked will be cast into hell (Matt. 13:40-43).

C. Vs. 35-36 - Resh - (ר)

Although this is a separate "proverb," it continues with the teaching on the doom of the wicked. David is making observation that he has seen much wickedness in his life, and the wicked becoming very powerful, yet he knew that God would have the ultimate say in their end.

The value of this knowledge for us today is that it should be of no concern to us how powerful or how successful the ungodly become. We need to do what God has given us to do and let Him take care of them.

D. Vs. 37-38 - Shin (ש)

1. "Mark the perfect man"
 - a) "Mark" - observe, watch, take note of - as used here, it is what follows that is to be carefully observed for the purpose of emulating.

- b) "The perfect man" - the word for "perfect" here is one that means to be well-rounded and balanced; to be a finished product. In its feminine form, it is translated "integrity" in the book of Job, defining what God means by "perfect."

There is an opposite view of this in the book of Philippians that sheds light on this statement.

Philippians 3:17-19

¹⁷ Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. ¹⁸ (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is* their belly, and whose glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

2. "And behold the upright" - a synonymous parallelism - "behold" = "mark"; "upright" = "perfect."
3. Verse thirty-eight (38) is that common comparison found in this psalm between the righteous and the wicked, and complete doom of the wicked.

E. Vs. 39-40 - Tav (ת) - the conclusion to the psalm

These verses form a fitting conclusion to the psalm. The use of the contrasting conjunction "but" in verse thirty-nine (39) immediately following its use in the previous verse helps us see that there is something different with this point as it is used in this poetic structure. The "but" in this verse is to show the connection with and the conclusion to the verses that preceded.

1. "The salvation of the righteous is of the LORD"
– although both temporal, spiritual, and eternal salvation are meant here, the second line of verse thirty-nine (39) qualifies the issue of salvation for the righteous: "he is their strength in the time of trouble." This is a theme from verse one to the end of this psalm.

Jonah 2:9

⁹ But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay *that* that I have vowed. Salvation *is* of the LORD.

2. Verse forty (40) continues with the explanation of how the LORD saves the righteous (as opposed to the sinner): he helps with whatever is needed, delivers them from the vices of the enemy, and saves them, not only now but for eternity, because they're trust is in Him.

Daniel 6:23

²³ Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.