

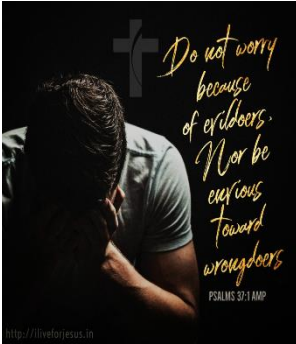
## Jealous of the Prosperity of the Wicked?<sup>1</sup>

### Psalms 37:1-11

Online Sermon:

[http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567)

The book of Psalms deals with some of the most perplexing issues we face such as “life and death, wisdom and folly, reward, and punishment”<sup>2</sup> but one of the most difficult challenges this book describes is how to not fret or feel jealous of the prosperity of the wicked! It is all too easy to experience negative emotions when seeing those with callous hearts and evil imaginations obtain riches, fame, and power,<sup>3</sup> often by unlawful means<sup>4</sup> and at the expense



<sup>1</sup> The Outline was partially taken from: Croft M. Pentz, [Sermon Outlines from the Psalms](#), Dollar Sermon Library Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1974), 25.

<sup>2</sup> Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 297.

<sup>3</sup> Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 297–298.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 793.

<sup>5</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [Psalms 1–41: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 316.

of God-fearing people!<sup>5</sup> If we are honest we must admit that even us born again believers are often envious of these “sinners’ possessions”<sup>6</sup> and the apparent stability and pleasure it brings their lives.<sup>7</sup>

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*Sometimes their prosperity promotes anger in our hearts that their injustices doesn’t seem to provoke the Lord who is sovereign over all things seen and unseen (Colossians 1:16) to give them the just rewards recompensing their atrocities.*

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While we know that these emotions are sins and often only serve to rob us of being at peace with what God has given us,<sup>8</sup> how are we to “remain cool”<sup>9</sup> and not become so envious that we end up joining them in their evil and folly? Psalms 37 masterfully outlines how God would have us view the prosperity of the wicked. The first part of this sermon is going to suggest that trust

<sup>6</sup> Croft M. Pentz, [Sermon Outlines from the Psalms](#), Dollar Sermon Library Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1974), 25.

<sup>7</sup> Robert L. Jr. Hubbard and Robert K. Johnston, “Foreword,” in *Psalms*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 180.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 793.

<sup>9</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [Psalms 1–41: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 316.

and fellowship with the Lord are crucial in keeping us from envying the wicked. The second part of this sermon is going to suggest that both fretting and anger are sins to be avoided and the last part of this sermon is going to review the destinies of both the wicked and the faithful to show how it is folly to be jealous of those with temporary pleasures but in the end face eternal damnation!

### Trusting in the Lord

To ensure one does not give into feelings of envy or anger at what appears to be unjust blessings for the wicked one must learn to trust in the Lord. “We must not let the seeming prosperity of the “wicked” and “those who do wrong” undermine



our trust in the just character and sovereign power of Yahweh.”<sup>10</sup> To keep from “giving into self-pity and hatred”<sup>11</sup> in the face of trials because the wicked seem to be on a mountaintop of blessings, King David says, requires having trust in the Lord (Psalms 37:3) that He

will always do good unto those He loves (Romans 8:28) and in difficult times comfort and lead them by the still waters that

gives them unspeakable joy despite their harsh circumstances (2 Corinthians 1:4; Psalms 23). Trusting in the Lord requires incredible faith that while one often cannot see how one’s circumstances are for one’s good one still believes beyond a doubt that since God’s ways are higher than our ways His plan for our lives is always better any outcome we could achieve by our own hand (Isaiah 55:8-9)!

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*It is the kind of faith that fully “relies on God, His favour, His providence, His promise, and His grace.”<sup>12</sup> It is not self-centered, nor it is passive but one in which the person that is quietly trusting in God will experience the power of God and in their born-again new life express gratitude by doing good to others.<sup>13</sup>*

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For example, it was through absolute trust the shepherd boy David fought the almost ten foot tall giant Goliath with but a sling and five smooth stones (2 Samuel 17), that Daniel prayed publicly despite knowing that this meant he would be thrown into the lion’s den (Daniel 6), that Queen Esther pleaded with the king Xerxes to save the Hebrew people despite knowing if he did not hold out his gold scepter in approval she would be executed (5:11), and it took incredible faith for Apostle Paul to

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<sup>10</sup> Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 603.

<sup>11</sup> Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 298.

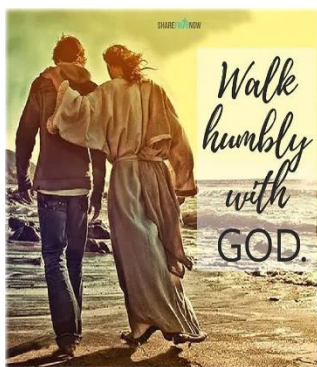
<sup>12</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 793–794.

<sup>13</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1–41: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 316.

be content in the face of being in prison, five times receiving the 40 lashes minus one, three times beaten with rods, and always being in danger from fellow Jews and Gentiles who persecuted him because of the Gospel message (2 Corinthians 11:20-29)! How does one get this kind of faith? ... by drawing nearer to the Lord and in feeling His infinite love being more than just content but overwhelmed with unspeakable joy that one's true reward in this life and the next is a relationship with one's Creator!

## Fellowship with the Lord

To truly trust in the Lord comes from spending time



under the shelter of His wings, submitting to His right to rule over one's life and basking in His glory! Before becoming born again we resisted a relationship with the Lord because we thought His commands "were too moralistic and harsh ... intended only to keep us from fulfilling themselves or having any fun."<sup>14</sup> Upon faith in His atoning

sacrifice (John 3:16) we received the Spirit of truth (John 16) that leads and guides us in a manner that the commands of God

are no longer seen as a burden but the means of living rightly and pleasing our holy God (1 John 5:3)! The reason why many Christians lose their first love in the Lord is due to not drawing nearer to Him (James 4:8)<sup>15</sup> and allowing Him to transform and renew their minds into His very image!

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*It is only through submission and solace with our Creator that we find there is unspeakable delight in His beauty, bounty, rest, and assurance that He alone is our portion forever!<sup>16</sup> King David states if we truly trust God by submitting to Him for every decision, we make<sup>17</sup> then we will find delight not only in His presence, but in receiving the promised desires of our hearts (verse 4)!*

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This does not mean that God will grant every "whimsical or irresponsible"<sup>18</sup> request we make but the assurance that anything asked in His will and name that is good for us will be granted! Our righteous rewards are not money, fame, or power that the worldly seek but fellowship with the "sovereign, exalted, awesome God the Bible everywhere pictures Him to be!"<sup>19</sup> Is not getting even a glimpse of the "grace, compassion,

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<sup>14</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*Psalms 1-41: An Expository Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 317.

<sup>15</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*Psalms 1-41: An Expository Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 317.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Henry, [\*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume\*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 794.

<sup>17</sup> Matthew Henry, [\*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume\*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 794.

<sup>18</sup> D. A. Carson, ed., [\*NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 917.

<sup>19</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*Psalms 1-41: An Expository Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 317.

mercy, kindness, patience and love”<sup>20</sup> of God truly the desires of a regenerate heart? Nothing in this world compares to the glory of God<sup>21</sup> so David rightly states when you are envious of the wicked remember your spiritual blessings in Christ for, He truly is the “righteous reward that shines like the dawn” (verse 6).

## Having Faith in the Lord

It is at this point that King David implores us to wait patiently on the Lord and not fret, be angry with or take justice into our own hands when we see the injustices of evil people. While it is natural, i.e., part of our sinful nature, to react with envy, anger, and resentment towards those who “bring evil devices against those who are virtuous and good,”<sup>22</sup> these negative emotions are not to be indulged by God’s children for a variety of reasons. First, envying others means one is not content with God’s gracious hand of blessings in one’s life<sup>23</sup> and therefore is a sin against His righteous path for you!<sup>24</sup> Second,

jealously often leads to anger which in turn tempts us<sup>25</sup> to seek the rewards of evil people by emulating their wicked ways.<sup>26</sup>



Whether one is angry at oneself for not attaining “worldly greatness” or God for allowing injustices to happen<sup>27</sup> or the perpetrator for being so evil and yet apparently blessed, it is a sin because it clearly demonstrates a lack of trust in God’s sovereignty and justice! Instead of allowing envy and anger to rule in our hearts King David states we are to put off these destructive emotions and “wait patiently upon the Lord” (verse 7). This means being silent and not murmuring or making complaints against injustices with the assurance that God will always do good to you and in His time punish those who perpetrate evil in this world.<sup>28</sup> King David is “not encouraging some kind of social indifference,”<sup>29</sup> but merely that there is great wisdom to be found in doing good in the face of evil (verse 3)!

<sup>20</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [Psalms 1–41: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 317.

<sup>21</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [Psalms](#), vol. 1, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 285.

<sup>22</sup> Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 794.

<sup>23</sup> Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 298.

<sup>24</sup> Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E.

Gaebelain, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 299.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 794.

<sup>26</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [Psalms](#), vol. 1, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 286.

<sup>27</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [Psalms 1–41: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 318.

<sup>28</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [Psalms](#), vol. 1, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 285.

<sup>29</sup> Robert L. Jr. Hubbard and Robert K. Johnston, “Foreword,” in *Psalms*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston,

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*Since anger never produces righteous living God desires (James 1:20)<sup>30</sup> is better to give over injustices to the One who judges the living and the dead (1 Peter 4:5) so that one might be freed up to do the good works one has been prepared to do for the glory of God the Father in heaven (Ephesians 2:10; Matthew 5:16).*

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## The Final Destination of the Wicked



At the end of this passage King David invites us to reflect upon the wicked from the perspective of the eternity God has placed within our hearts. In another Psalm Asaph admitted that in seeing the prosperity of the wicked he

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Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 181.

<sup>30</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 15, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 167.

<sup>31</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1–41: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 318.

<sup>32</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 15, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 167.

had become so jealous of them that “his feet almost slipped” to join them in their evil endeavors (73:3). We can almost feel his anguish when he states, “surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence” (73:13)! He then confesses that when he tried to understand the injustice of wickedness it troubled him deeply right up until he entered the sanctuary of God and was told of their final destiny (73:16-17). How foolish it is to fret about the prosperity of the wicked when King David says, “like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away” (verse 2). We are so consumed by the present<sup>31</sup> and in a lack of trust in God’s righteousness we presume the prosperity of the wicked is sustainable.

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*When we see “everything rooted in time and eternity (Isaiah 40:8); 1 John 2:17)”<sup>32</sup> we quickly come to realize that since “outward prosperity is a fading thing”<sup>33</sup> in God’s time everyone will be held accountable for how they lived their lives on this earth.*

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Like the grass and herbs that dies quickly as soon as the dry desert wind parches the land so too will the wicked shall die<sup>34</sup> to

<sup>33</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 793.

<sup>34</sup> Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 298.

face everlasting torment in an unquenchable fire where there will forever be “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:42). It is not that we should wish this fate on them, for even the Lord is “patient to return not wishing anyone to perish” (2 Peter 3:9), but in seeing their prosperity here on earth this should not provoke envy or anger but compassion to tell them about the Lord so that they might submit to His right to rule in their lives and in turn receive unspeakable blessings that cannot fade or spoil.

## The Inheritance of the Believer

Considering the destination of the wicked King David says the meek ought to rejoice even in hardships because one day soon they “will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity”



(verse 11). “*The meek* is one of the many terms used in this psalm to refer to those who trust in Yahweh, obey Him, rely completely on Him; see “those who wait for the Lord” (verse 9); “the poor and needy” (verse 14); “those who walk uprightly” (verse 14); “the righteous” (verses 16, 17, 21, 25, 29, 30, 33, 39); “the blameless” (verse 18); “those

in whose way He delights” (verse 23).”<sup>35</sup> “Meekness is not to be

confused with weakness”<sup>36</sup> for a variety of reasons. First, those who have received every spiritual blessing in the Lord are far from weak but blessing to do things greater than we could ever ask or imagine and second, anything one asks in the name and will of the Lord always comes to pass! King David rightly reminds God’s children what would later be reemphasized by the Lord on the Sermon on the Mount that the meek shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). And while our riches are often not of this earth is not spending an eternity in the Lord’s presence with crowns of righteousness far better than the trinkets and toys the wicked strive to obtain? Who would ever trade a single day in heaven to live a wicked person’s day on earth even if their temporary riches are a great source of pleasure? Who would ever trade the “great shalom” peace<sup>37</sup> that is found in the loving arms of our sovereign God to live a life of fear of losing what one cannot keep and reluctant to gain what one cannot lose? Let me conclude with a challenge: instead of being envious of the prosperity of the wicked show them the way, truth, and life (John 14:6), you know the precious Treasure you found in the field (Matthew 13:44). Tell them about the spiritual blessings you have in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3) and the peace that surpasses all understanding under His wings (Philippians 4:7; Psalms 91:4). And then with boldness, gentleness, humility, and love ask them what is keeping them from trading in their trinkets to receive eternal life in heaven where there will be no more sorrow, pain, death, or sin as one of God’s very own children (Revelation 21:4, 27, John 1:12)?

<sup>35</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reayburn, [\*A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms\*](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 353.

<sup>36</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*Psalms 1–41: An Expository Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 318.

<sup>37</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reayburn, [\*A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms\*](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 353.