

Transcription of 18TM810

Psalm 37:1-11 "Living Satisfied in a Discontented World"
March 18, 2018

Shall we open our Bibles this morning to Psalm 37, verse 1.

The Psalms are best for us because they leave us with truths that are easy to digest, easy to remember. They usually outline very well. You can leave with two or three principles in the heart as you read the Psalms that you can just kind of grab hold of. They're easier, I think, than theological books because a lot of times that takes a lot of thinking, but these are just -- they're right there in the present tense, these practical bits of living advice from God.

So this is a long Psalm. We're only going to take the first 11, verses and the reason is, the theme is established in the first 11 verses. It is a Psalm, that it's predominant theme is what a lot of people struggle with, and that is, why is it so hard for Christians to have an easy life when the world seems to have an easy one? You read it in Psalm 39. In fact, David will write of Psalm 39, just a couple chapters ahead here, with that same theme. Asaph will write about it in Psalm 73; asks the same question, why do we struggle so much and the world has it so easy? Why are the wicked prospering in their wickedness, while the saints just struggle in their devotion to holiness before the Lord? So we're going to take the theme part. We're going to take the attitude that the Lord would have us to have and a couple of things that we can pick up there as David in the first 11 verses sets out the principles.

But you should go through the rest of it and park yourself in this -- on these verses for a while. Verses 12 through 22 talk about what the wicked favor. In verse 23 to about verse -- oh, I don't know -- verse 31 or so, it's the path that the wicked has forsaken, and then the rest of the chapter talks about the things or the truths that the wicked have forgotten. What the wicked favor, what the wicked have forsaken, and what the wicked have forgotten. But David starts to talk to us first, so that's why we want to take these 11 verses.

We are sure that David wrote this when he was older. David died at 70 years old, which wasn't really old, even by Old Testament standards. We know this for a fact though because verse 25 said, "I have been young, but now I'm old." If you ever wonder where I get stuff, look right there, verse 25. And David writes from years of experience, and he writes with kind of the lack of inhibition that you often find in younger folks.

I have found that old people just say what they want, and they get away it. My grandmother could say the most awful things, and then smile, and everybody would go, oh, your grandma's very cute. She could get away with murder. And it was almost like she had the attitude of, I got to be this old, let's see if you can. She didn't care anymore what you thought. Well, I think David, he writes with that kind of an attitude here. No restraint, just kind of laying it out, but things that he has learned from God over the years. These aren't early on lessons. These are lessons that have proved themselves over the years of God's faithfulness, and especially how to handle the difficulty that comes when you look around the world and you find that the world seems to live devoid of God, and it seemed to have an even easy time of it, and we have such a difficult time walking with God. So we've entitled these verses "Living Satisfied in a Discontented World," because that's what we have to learn to do. And David's main point is found in the first couple of verses, and then you kind of just build on them through verse 11.

Verse 1, "Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." The note that David strikes early and often is these three words: Do not fret. Translate them, don't get hot under the collar, don't get all worked up because of evildoers. I guess in modern language, we could just say David says to us, chill out. He says it in verse 1, he says it in verse 7, he says it in verse 8. Chill out.

It can obviously become a frustrating thing for us as Christians to seek God and trust God and ask God for open doors and an easier way of life, and then we look around and we see unbelievers living their lives in such a way that they don't even seem to have a measurable consequence to their actions. We turn around, forget to pray, and we feel like, oh, man, that's what it was, I forgot to pray. And yet the unbeliever just seems to live his life like he's getting away with murder. He has the last laugh. He's not struggling like we are. He doesn't seem to have as much difficulty in life as we've had. We want to love the Lord and we want to make good choices, and they're hard to make and we struggle through them, and to try to live righteously is something that we're interested in, but the world doesn't seem to care at all. And man, things seem to go well for them.

And whether you voice it or not, whether you express it out loud or just think it in your heart, sometimes the apparent free pass evildoers get, they leave you with great consternations. It's confusing, if nothing else. We complain about politicians and their

abuse of power, we point our finger at media, you know, liberal bias. We count, you know, and highlight court's inability to just administer justice fairly. We talk about the sliding scale of morality that the culture accepts. And the workers of iniquity just seem to live charmed lives. We're all frustrated and they can care less. Don't fret. Want to live satisfied in a discontented world, start with not fretting about everything that you see around you.

"Charah." "Charah" (Khaw-raw, Khaw-raw) is the Hebrew word for fret, and it literally means to become blazoned with anger, or if you will, to become incensed; that somehow there is this miscarriage of justice. God isn't fair. There's no accountability for the workers of iniquity. Spurgeon wrote on this verse, and I wrote it down in my Bible, "To fret is to worry or to have heartburn or to fume and to become vexed in nature is very apt to take a fire of jealousy when it sees lawbreakers riding horses while obedient subjects just wander in the mire."

The Lord begins by saying this to us: Don't get angry about the life of sinners, who have no apparent consequence to their way of life, whose way of life seems far easier than yours, and don't be envious to desire, jealous of their way of life. Verse 2, because "they will soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as a green herb." In simplest terms, they might look like they're getting away with it, but their gain is only for a moment. It's not going to last. Green grass grows for the season. We have great grass certain times of the year, and then at other times it just looks horrible. If you go to the Mid East and you see these beautiful walls of flowers and wheat fields and all, the minute summer comes and the Sirocco winds blow out of Africa across the Mid East, everything just turns brown. It's ugly. There's a reason we don't go to Israel in the summer. Well, it's 200 degrees. That's the first one. And it's expensive as can be. I don't get it. We go in February. Everything is beautiful and blooming and the weather's nice. But that's the example that the Lord uses. Everything that looks so beautiful and blossoming doesn't last very long, and the spring vegetation turns into losing its beauty in the summer.

Asaph wrote in Psalm 73 the same thing. He said that his feet had almost slipped when he considered the prosperity of the wicked, how they never have a hard time, they never seem to get sick, they're never upset at anything. And he went on for about 16 verses just complaining about what he saw in their life. And then he said in verse 17 of Psalm 73, that is until I considered their end. And I understood it, that their feet are standing in slippery places and they're going to be cast down to destruction in a moment, and desolation will fall upon them and they will be consumed utterly and

they'll have terror. And he looked at all that he'd envied and all that he fretted over and thought, man, in the long run, that's not going to work for me.

So here's the first principle: Realizing that all that you are desirous of is a short-term gain. We should take that truth to heart. And I'll apply it to you in a more logical sense. If you go to buy a new car today, none of you are going to walk into the car dealership and say this: I need a car that will fall apart in 12 months. No, you want extended warranty, you don't want to pay for it, you want to cover everything. If you run over a nail, you want them to pay for it. We're all about demanding quality. Nobody goes over to Best Buy and says, I want to buy a T.V. for the weekend. It can blow up on Monday, but we got to see the football game on Sunday. We're all about things lasting. We consider ourselves wise when we pursue that angle. We ask for warranties to assure that things will last. If we can't get warranties, we want insurance, that someone else will pay when this thing doesn't do what it's supposed to do.

Well, translate that into spiritual things. The Lord says, don't be envious of the evil workers, because it's only going to last for a little while. You don't want what they have. They're going to lose everything quickly. So to be jealous of the world, their way of life, their successes, their gains, to say to yourself, whether you say it out loud or not, I want to be just like them, I want to have what they have and I want to live as they live, is to forget that it isn't going to last. And if you remember it, then it becomes utter foolishness to want to have what they have. You want to live a satisfied life in a very discontented world, you remember that the way of the wicked is short-lived. And in the end their harvest is nothing to be envious of. Their worlds are going to come crashing down, and no one will envy their spiritual condition.

Don't fret, become angry. Don't be envious, become jealous. Now, despite that counsel, unfortunately you still find amongst the believers so often those very two things: Anger about how the world gets away with things, jealous about what they have.

I thought about Martha there in the gospels, was sure worked up when Mary had not helped her in the kitchen for five minutes. She comes out of the kitchen with flour in her hair and on her face and everywhere else, a scowled look, stands in the doorway and says to Jesus, "Tell my sister to help me. How we ever going to eat? I been in here all day slaving over a hot stove and look at her, 'I'm just sitting with Jesus.'" Never mind the fact that Jesus said to her, "Martha, you're way too busy all the time. Marry has chosen the better part and I'm not going to take that away from her. Quit

fretting, Martha." His counsel fell on deaf ears, and every time we see Martha in the Bible, every place, she's always busy. Going, going, going. Never a minute to sit or to rest. I wonder how often you and I lose the joy of the better place that God has given to us, sitting at His feet, fellowship with His people and with Him, while we stand in the doorway like Martha and we fret about life in the kitchen, the world, the seeming carefree life of the ungodly, who are convinced they don't need God's help at all. And yet here you are, trying to live for the Lord.

Jesus said a lot about worrying and fretting and complaining. Go to the Sermon on the Mount and start reading in chapter 5 and 6 and 7 of Matthew, how He says to the disciples there, don't worry about your life, what you're going to eat or what you're going to drink, what you're going to put on your body, what you're going to wear. Your life is much more important than food and your body is far more important than just clothing. And then He said, look at the birds. They're not sweating eating and they're getting fed every day. They're not struggling. They're not worrying. You don't see birds with gray feathers that are falling out. They're good. They're extremely good. So what are you doing worrying? Look at the lilies of the field. They don't labor, they don't spin, they don't toil. They're the most beautiful thing on the planet, and they only last for a little while. They come and they go. If God clothed the grass of the field, which is today in the field and tomorrow in the ovens being cooked, how much can He clothe you? Don't worry. Don't sweat it, what you're going to eat, what you're going to drink, what you're going to wear. That's what the gentiles worry about it. And the term "gentiles" literally means those that don't know God. If you're in the world, that's all your life is, but you seek first the kingdom of God. It's all about keeping the main thing the main thing.

1,000 years BC, David here writes the same issue. Consider the end of the wicked and you'll be glad you're separated from them. You don't want to stand with them on that day. You don't want to acknowledge you know them, or that you ever wanted to be just like them. We see the rich mocking God, convinced that being an actor gives you an absolute right to tell everyone else how to live, or that somehow you're wiser. But not for long. Don't bother growing hot under the collar while the sinner skates through life. Don't be envious of his temporal gains. I think it was G. Campbell Morgan who wrote of these passage, test is time. All of the prosperity, apparent prosperity, of the wicked is transient. It passes, it perishes, and the wicked perish with it.

So what do we do instead? Verse 3 says this: "Trust in the Lord, do good; dwell in the land, and feed yourself on His faithfulness.

And delight yourself in the Lord, He'll give you the desires of your heart." Rather than fretting or becoming envious, trust God. Delight yourself in what God has given to you. Realize how much you have and feed yourself on His faithfulness.

There is something extremely important in the Bible about what captures and what preoccupies your attention, what you think about. Paul said think on the things that are pure and holy and have a good report. Fill your mind with the things that are godly. So David says this: Rather than being preoccupied with those around you, if your focus is constantly on the ungodly and the unfairness of their apparent easy way of life, your attitude is going to be angry all the time. If you're not jealous, you're just perturbed. And it won't be long before you lose your view of what God has done for you. His word won't help you and it won't move you. You'll have a skewed view of life, which will misgovern your behavior, because you don't see things as God does. And yet you should. If I am captivated by the God that I serve, if I give Him my full attention, if I keep my eyes upon Him and trust in Him and believe in what He says, like verse 1 and 2, then I can focus again on doing the right thing, something that I would probably be remiss to do if I was upset. I'd like to bless them, but I hate them. Look how easy they're having it. As I do, I can dwell in the land. Very poetic books; right? This is the poetry books. Dwell in the land. Translation: Live each day of my life. I can dwell in the land, feeding on His faithfulness, or if you will, being satisfied and sustained by what God has done; that every day you get up and you're satisfied. You're satisfied. Now I'm not looking at the world and everything I don't have; I'm looking at the Lord and everything I do have.

He becomes your delight. It's a great word in Hebrew. It means to thrill one's heart. And rather than the world or the wicked being your dismay, God becomes your delight and His faithfulness becomes your assurance. So I delight in the Lord and then something happens: in my heart I begin to want what God wants. No longer wanting what I see around me, I now delight myself in God. And my delight and my desires line up with His. And then God makes me this promise: I will give you the desires of your heart, but it is because my desires of my heart are now lined up with His will. I'm seeing things as He sees them. I want what God wants.

And David invites his readers to replace anger and envy with a conscious delight in the Lord. In mind, in heart, to consider God's great goodness. And that doesn't happen overnight. You have to consciously decide to consider what you have. We have to leave and withdraw our eager desires from the things of the world and fix them on the Lord. If that happens, you will after a while no longer desire

the things of the world. You'll not want what they have. You will not envy what they have. You'll pity what they have. You'll be blessed, and you'll see things clearly as God intends.

So the separation between the two; rather than your heart and your head being turned by the apparent success, if you will, of the wicked, you look to God and you find yourself delighted. I said in the first service, "Whether you know it or not, you guys are spoiled. Aren't you? You are a spoiled bunch of -- not brats, Christians." And truthfully so. God loves to bless his kids. But if you're always in the world going, oh, look what they're doing, look what they got, look what they're doing. Look how easy it is for them, and you just lose your perspective, you'll also lose your joy. You'll never live a satisfied life in this world that never has enough.

He says in verse 5, "You should commit your way to the Lord, and you should trust also in Him, He's going to bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth your righteousness as a light and your justice as the noonday." He repeats, trust in the Lord. He said it in verse 3 at the beginning, he says it in verse 5 in the middle, but he adds another injunction for -- to incorporate in our outlook, and that is commit yourself or commit your ways to the Lord.

"Galal" is a word that means to roll over. The word commit literally means to fold over, to roll over, or take all your frets and cares and envies and just give them to the Lord. Rather than, oh, I shouldn't feel that way. Just go, here, God, deal with these. Change my heart. It is the equivalent of 1st Peter 5:7 that says if you'll cast your cares upon Him, He'll do all that. Cast all of them on Him. He cares for you. Or dislodge the burden, if you will, from your shoulders and put them on the Lord.

The key to living a peaceful life is letting God have your concerns. If you continue to struggle with what I see and what I want and what's not right and what's not fair, you'll forfeit your peace, you'll continue to struggle, because there's no answer for that. Struggling and frustration and envy can rip you off. So better that you say Lord, here, take these things so that I can view the world around with me with a proper perspective. And then worry will go and fretting will stop and envy will be set aside. I don't want for anything.

The long-term advantage of walking with God is that over time you get to learn that God knows far better than you what's best for you. I think I was 40 years old before I would be willing to say to my father, you were right. Unfortunately, he was dead by then. I'll tell him when I see him. It will be later, but better than never.

When I was 18, I knew everything. When I was 21, I knew even more. The older you get, the less you realize that you know. So He is far wiser, and committing my life to Him is logical, it's reasonable. He'll bring His promises to pass in my life.

And he says something else in verse 6 which is very important. He said, if you'll live a life like that, your light will begin to shine in such a way that people will look to you. Your justice, your way of life will shine like it's noontime and the sun is out. You'll be the brightest witness around. And I think everyone would agree that a witness that is the most powerful is the one that the world would see you walking with God in a way that He would want. You're not just talking, you're living it. You're living it out.

"So rest," verse 7, "in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; and don't fret because of he who prospers in his way, and because of the man who can bring wicked schemes to pass. Cease from your anger, forsake your wrath," which is just anger that's boiling over, "don't fret - it only causes harm." Same theme. Rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him. Here's a truth you got to hang on to. Time is on your side. God will deal with the evildoer and he will be cut off in time. Verse 9, "the evildoer shall be cut off." That's coming. So you can just wait patiently on the Lord. Rather than wanting what they have, just be still, just be quiet, enjoy what God has given you, and wait it out. Because when all is said and done, you're going to stand. So don't fret, don't get angry, don't steam within.

And then the Lord says this: It's doesn't do any good. In fact, he says the opposite, it's going to do you great harm. And I suspect that this harm is mostly to you. You're the frustrated one. You're the one who now can't shine. You're always complaining, always upset. I'm so amazed at watching Christians just go off on their rants about politics, as if somehow they're going to change anything. You want to change something, lead people to Jesus. That's eternally changed. Oh, one at a time.

We are so frustrated, constantly frustrated, when we have so much to be rejoicing in. You want to live satisfied in a discontented world, you just rest in the Lord. Don't be angry. Don't be stirred up. Delight in Him. Rest in Him. The words are great. You can circle them, commit and rest and have patience.

Finally, he says in verse 9 this: "For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait upon the Lord," there's that waiting again, "they're going to inherit the earth. Yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; indeed, you will look carefully for his

place, but you'll see it no more. But the meek, they're going to inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." If you really want to live a satisfied life in this discontented world, have a long-term view. Don't look at just today or tomorrow or whatever's at arm's length. In the end the meek inherit the earth, while the wicked are completely cut off. In fact, you won't be able to find their place. The Lord describes that waiting period in verse 10 as just a little while. In a little while. The wicked life is attached to a timer. And soon, ding, it's over. You're cooked. But you don't have a timer. You get to live forever. Those who look for Him in that day will not find them, but they'll find Him. So you wait.

Jesus took verse 11 in the Sermon on the Mount in chapter 5 of Matthew, verse 5, and quotes this 1,000 years later. It just works. So why fret, why be angry about how things are around you? Why be envious of a world that's not going anywhere? Why rage within? Why struggle and strife, when you can just count your blessing and trust the Lord and delight and dwell in Him, commit and be restful, and wait patiently and be filled with an abundance of peace? That can happen to you.

As you know, that the end tells how to live from the beginning. Look where it's going, get on the right track. Get on the right path. Faith in Jesus is satisfying in a world that can't be satisfied. So look, you're the only ones that can really live. I know that the T.V. commercials will tell you that you can't really live without beer or steak or barbecue, a medicine that the doctor won't give you without asking. You can really live, man. You are going to heaven. And you are blessed. There's nothing that the world has that will get you any closer to the Lord. In fact, everything you want from them is going to burn. You're a spoiled bunch of Christians. Don't forget.