

## **Psalms: Book One (Part Three)**

### **Trust In God**

**Richard T. Ritenbaugh**

**Given 18-Apr-15; Sermon #1263**

I know a full week has passed since the last sermon so you probably forgot all about it, but I thought that it would be good, just to get a little bit of a running start, to review the main two themes of the introduction to Book One of the Psalms, which were Psalm 1 and Psalm 2. And we are going to do this: rather than going into Psalm 1 or Psalm 2, we are going to go into another psalm that reflects these same two themes and that carries it forward.

Now just to recap so that you understand what the two main themes are so we are all on the same page, the two main themes are first, the Hebrew word, Torah, which should be understood as the instruction of God, and very general, do not think of it as the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Do not think of it as the Ten Commandments. Do not think of it as any particular set of laws or even the covenant.

Think of it broadly, as all the instruction that God has given. And it does not have to even be in the Old Testament. It is all the instruction that is given in the New Testament. It is even the instruction that God gives you through your own experiences *living* out His instruction. Sometimes we do not get it when it is black and white on the page, we get it when we do it, and we do it repeatedly, and we begin to see the fruits of it. We begin to see the promises being fulfilled of what that law produces in our life. So that really puts it in the mind, it really makes it heartfelt and heart believed, if I can use a phrase like that.

The second major theme is the Hebrew word messiah. And that means anointed. It means the one who is anointed or set apart for a particular purpose, a particular part to play in God's plan. And of course, the Messiah is the Son, which we see brought out in Psalm 2. That God anointed the Son to be the One that rules the earth and that He is going to bring judgment upon those who go against God. And so He is the person, then, that the instruction of God points toward. He is the perfect Model of all of that instruction. He is

the personal God of our fathers, and of us. He is the Head of the church. He is our Savior and the One who has done everything for us. He is the One that watches over us and He will be the One who returns and changes us and brings us into glory. All these things He was anointed to do by the Father—and so He means everything to us.

So what we have here in this introduction of these two psalms is that these are the two big, major things that we need to be concentrating on: God's instruction, which we get in various ways, reading sermons, our own experiences living with God, etc., plus our personal relationship with the Son. We do this a lot through prayer and through His working with us. But we get to know *Him*, not just the things that He teaches, but we have come to understand the Person, His own character, His personality, and all of His hopes for us and what He wants us to accomplish.

These are the two things. It is easy to remember. One is the Word of God, in here, in the Bible, the instruction of God. The other is the Word of God, the Person who is the Logos, the Word. So it is kind of like a two-pronged fork here of the Word and the Word. But we understand the Word. We come to know the Word through two different means: through instruction and through a relationship.

Those are the two big, major themes of Psalms and Psalm, Book One. But they are put at the head of all the psalms because it is a theme that runs through all 150. And of course, it is a theme that runs through the whole Bible, but we need to understand that this is what David or whoever the editor is that is writing Psalm 1 and Psalm 2. They are unattributed so we do not know exactly who wrote them. But those are the two things they want us to really think about as we are going through the Psalms.

The psalm that we are going to use as a review of these two things appears almost halfway through Book One, and it is almost like God wanted to make sure that as we approach the halfway point in Book One, that we reiterate these things and get them in our minds firmly once again, so that we have them there for the last half of Book One. So the one we are going to be doing looking over or studying is Psalm 19. That is just one short of the halfway

point. There are 41 psalms in Book One. twenty is essentially the halfway point between the beginning and the end, so 19 is close enough, close enough for horseshoes and hand grenades or whatever they say.

I want to read Psalm 19 in full and then we will break it down a little bit. And by the way, if you want to just open up your hymnal and follow along, this is our hymn that is on pages 16 and 17, "The Heavens God's Glory Do Declare."

**Psalm 19:1-14** The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven, and its circuit to the other other end; there is nothing hidden from its heat.

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.

Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.

It is a wonderful psalm. And I think you could probably already see the way that it is set up, what we have in Psalm 19:7-11 are a precursor to Psalm 119,

which is long meditation on the law of God, which we went over a couple of years ago in the psalms about Book Five. Psalm 19:1-6 declare that God's creation, particularly that area that we call outer space, the heavens, reveals the creative power and the glory of God.

Now, it is easy to see these two themes. In that second section, starting with verse 7, we see the law, God's instruction. And in the first section, we see the Creator God magnified. He is the One with all the power. He is the One that set everything going. And that same One, the Creator of God, is the Son. At that time, He was not called the Son. He was God. He was Logos, if you want to call Him that. But He was the One who became our Messiah. So we have these two themes.

But in Psalm 19, unlike chapter 1 and chapter 2, they are flipped. Chapter 1 started with the law. Chapter 2 was the Son. This one starts with the sun and the Son, which is interesting, and then goes to the law. So it just flips them around but uses the same two themes.

Let us look at verses 1-6 a little bit more closely. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork." I mean, that is pretty clear what we are talking about here. That when we look up into the night sky particularly, but it could be the day sky as well because He gets to the sun a little bit later on, but we look at the stars and we look at the moon and we see everything whirring around in their orbits and everything works smoothly.

And these are such magnificent things. They are millions or billions of miles away, light years away, but we can see their light! They must be powerful things out there, but they all work according to how God set them there. God set one here and He set one there and He set the earth here; and all of these things work for us. God makes them work for us so that we can know times. The moon, the way the Hebrews used the moon, of course, that was their months, by the moon. Obviously, the sun has a lot to do with the day and the year, and the stars are up there and they give us light in the night time (and I do not have this in my notes), but there are people like, was it Jukes or was it Bullinger, who believed that the gospel story was written in the stars, in the constellations.

And so all of these things just show God's foresight, and power, and wisdom, and He did all this for us. Is it not amazing? I mean, in Psalm 8, when David was doing much the same thing, looking up into the night sky and seeing all these wonderful things, he turned around and said, "What is man that You are mindful of him?" In this case, he does not say that. He says, what a great law You have, God. After he thinks about all the wonders in the heavens, his mind turns to God's law, and if the mind of God can create these wonderful gaseous things out there and planets and planetoids and satellites of planets and all these things, and they all work together, what does that mean about His law?

The same mind worked on His law that worked on all these wonderful creations in the heavens. And if they work so wonderfully up there without any kind of seeming oversight (there is oversight, we find out that the Son sustains all these things by the word of His power), but if these things happen up there and they are so regular, we can depend on them for our time and all those things, for gravity, for all the laws and such that are up there, then we can have the same faith in His law. We can have the same trust that He has put His law together in a way that is going to be good for us. And we can count on it because there is all these physical laws of the universe that are working in those planets, and suns, and stars, and moons, and whatnot up there.

And there is a spiritual law that is working in the law or in the instruction of God. And so we can understand if you take your mind out of the sky and put them on the pages of His Word, we are going to get the same trustworthy guidance, the same power. It is just transferred into a different form and we can then move forward in trusting God.

So the psalmist opens with his main point. The sun, the moon, the stars, and all their movements, and all the functions they perform for us, do not just indicate or suggest, but, as he says here, they declare, they cry out, they proclaim as fact that *God* did this, and this God has great power and a stupendous mind, and He is perfect in everything He does. And if we would just look at it; it says day unto day, night unto night. If we would look at it every day and watch its patterns, if we would look at it every night and see how everything goes, we would gain knowledge. It is not speaking, it does not have words.

This is one of the paradoxes—the poetic form that he uses is a paradox here because those things do not speak—the stars do not speak, the moon does not speak, the sun does not speak. But they are actually teaching us without words about God. That is the knowledge that he talks about here at the end of verse 2, "Day unto day utter speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge." And I would put in parentheses or brackets after that, [of God]. That is what it is telling us about. Or I should say, He is what those things are telling us about. They are revealing the Creator and a lot of things about Him. His precision, for one thing, His power, and many other things besides. The beauty of it all and on and on and on. It is all there for us to see.

Then he goes on in verse 3 and he says, There is no speech, there is no language. It is not coming to us in a verbal form at all. We do not hear their voice. But he says in verse 4, "their line," as it says in the New King James and I think the King James uses the same word, but line is probably not good because it is parallel with the second half of the verse. It should be "their cry" or "their voice" or something along that line. Their voice "has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." Even though they do not speak, it is like they are hammering at us, crying to us, declaring to us all about God, if we would just take the time to look, to study, to think, to meditate about what God has done in His creation.

But the thing is, what David says in verse 3 here, essentially, there is no speech or language, their voice is not heard. He kind of turns it around and what he is saying there is that most of mankind does not listen. Even though their speech goes out all over the earth, anybody with two eyes can look up into the sky and see it. It does not matter where on earth they are, it is there for them to see, but no one seems to be watching, no one seems to be listening. No one is taking note. It is like the people of earth just are not listening. They do not make the right connections, they do not see. I mean, they may look up there into the heavens and see. "Oh, you know, this star is called this and that star is called that, and this is a great galaxy, not just one star, but it looks like one star to us because it's so far away, but it's got billions of stars in it and it's beautiful and wonderful!" And they will know all these things, but they never make the connection that they had to have a Creator and that Creator is greater than that whole galaxy. He is greater than the universe that He made.

Paul picks this up in Romans 1. We will read verses 18 through 21. This is a section of scripture we know quite well.

**Romans 1:18** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

He takes us a little bit further than David did. David said they are just not listening, they are not hearing what is out there for them to hear. But Paul here says they are suppressing in unrighteousness the truth. Yeah, there are some who know and maybe there are a lot who know deep down, but they are suppressing it. They are putting it down because they want to sin, essentially. They want to do what they want to do. And so if that means ignoring God, well, that is what they do.

**Romans 1:19-21** . . .because what may be known of God is manifest in them [the testimony is there in the heavens, in the creation], for God has shown it to them. [He has not put it behind a curtain. He has made it very plain, He has revealed it all.] For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made [by the creatures, by us], even His eternal power and [divine nature] so that they are without excuse [It is so obvious and so plain that they have no excuse for it. They cannot say they were ignorant. They are willfully ignorant of it.], because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

It says later on that He gave them over to a debased mind. He just let them go their own way. If they were going to ignore what He put out there, that was so plain to see, and it was not their time, He was not going to call them. He just kind of gave them over to the darkness that they desired and He will work with them at another time.

But that is essentially it. It is all there for them to see. It is very obvious, but they have suppressed it. They do not want to make the right connections. They do not want to think that it is the Great God that is behind all of this.

And so they think that if they could just ignore it, put it to the side, that they can go ahead and do what they want to do. But David and Paul both say, it is so clear, there is no excuse.

Let us go back to Psalm 19 and get into the little bit he has here about the sun. "In them [meaning in outer space] He has set a tabernacle for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven, and its circuit to the other end; and there is nothing hidden from its heat."

David and Paul are on the same wavelength here. What did Paul get to? Paul (we did not read this part), but when God gave them over to this debased mind, they began to worship things other than the Creator. They worshipped animals, they worshipped various parts of nature. And one of the things that they worshipped, most of them ended up having a worship of the sun. And what is interesting is that in most of these pantheons of gods, the sun was a god of justice, which is interesting because that is what he gets to in this. There are plays on words all through the end of verse 4 through verse 6, between the sun and what it does and justice, things that have to do with justice. And it is kind of neat to see, we will not go into it quite that deeply. But I just wanted to throw that out there.

So David's description of the sun, he says it is set, meaning something set it. First, we have to understand that. And not only that, this something that set it there, set it in the firmament, as if the firmament was just a tent, a tabernacle, like this is just a small part of what is out there. And so this sun, this great orb of gas that rushes through space and we revolve around it, it is being run by Somebody who is much bigger, much more powerful than it. It, that bigger, more powerful entity, of course, that is God, is much stronger than the sun. And he uses the idea of largeness here. That our God stands *outside* the tent that He made for the sun to run its course in.

What David argues here is that the sun is a creation of God. And so the people who are ignoring God are making a god out of a created thing. Why do they not worship the Creator of that thing? Well, they do not want to. But he argues that God made the sun and it moves as He tells it to move, as He set it in the heavens. And not only that, in its brilliance and its regularity and all the things that it does for mankind, gives heat to the earth, it gives light to



the earth, it makes things grow, it does all kinds of things for us and for the rest of creation, and all those things glorify God, not the sun. The sun is just doing what it has been made to do. The glory goes to God who made it. And so the question is: why do people not worship the Creator God instead of the creation, the sun?

And then you get to the very end of verse 6, "and there is nothing hidden from its heat." Let us think about this. The sun is often in these pantheons the god of justice. And the sun, in the way he is looking here, is able to reach out with its heat to everything on earth. Nothing is hidden from the sun. The sun will reveal all darkness, it will bring things to light, and it will scorch them if exposed too long. Well, David is saying here, the Creator God who made the sun is even more aware. If there is nothing that is hidden from the sun's heat, there is certainly nothing hidden from God's eye. He sees all and He will bring everything into judgment.

Heat here is one of those double entendre words for justice or judgment. Have you ever heard about the police or a court bringing the heat on someone? That is the same expression here that David is using. "Look, you think you're hiding from God," is what he is saying. "If you continue that God's going to bring the heat! You can't remain hidden from God. So why don't you just acknowledge Him and worship Him? That would be the smart thing to do because you're already exposed."

Then we get to the second section on Torah or on instruction. I do not think I am going to read all these, but I do want you to notice one thing. It is very regular and it is in the way that it is organized here between verses 7 and 9 especially. And I want you to notice that every time it is the law of the Lord, the testimony of the Lord, statutes of the Lord, commandment of the Lord, fear of the Lord, judgments of the Lord. Did you notice where they are all coming from?

I want you to notice one other thing. If you would go and look at the first six verses, you would see that the word "Lord" is not in there. It is God. So what we are looking at here is, remember this is something that was also in one of the other books of Psalms. I think it might have been Book Two. But in here we have the first part of it focusing on God—Elohim. That is the Great God of creation, the powerful God. Remember, if you go through Genesis 1, it is

all about in the beginning God. God did this, God did that, God did this. It is El, El, El or Elohim, Elohim, Elohim. And the focus here, by using this divine name, is on power, on His creative power, on His great abilities.

But here it moves to the Lord, the YHWH, Yahweh, the Tetragrammaton, as it is called; and that changes things because this is the name that God revealed to Moses and to others, the patriarchs and such, as His personal name. It is the name by which He made the covenant with them. So it became the personal name of God, the personal name of our covenant God, the One who has a deal with us, a bargain. And so we are supposed to switch, then, between verse 6 and verse 7, from looking at God as this awesome, wonderful Creator Being out there with all this power to the One who stands beside us, who is our Friend, who is the One that we have made the deal with. The One that we both signed the bottom of the contract with. He is the One that we have a personal relationship with.

Now, it is kind of ironic because when we looked at the Son in Psalm 2, we were supposed to see Him as the King, Yahweh, your personal Savior. Well, this is flipping things over because now we are looking at the law and we are supposed to look at God's law in terms of the personal relationship that we have. So it kind of throws in a little bit of a wrench into the works here. But we are supposed to understand this as that the law is being given to us—the law, the testimony, the statutes, the commandments, the fear, and the judgments—as instruction from a friend or a person that we have a relationship with that is intimate. And so we are not supposed to look on the law or the instruction from the standpoint of it being given by this great and powerful Being that we have to obey or we will be smashed!

That is not the way it is supposed to be here. David turns it around and says, we keep the law of God, we keep the testimony, we keep the statutes, commandments, fear, judgments, because we have this relationship with a personal Being who loves us. We want to obey because we want to please this other One that we have made the covenant with. It is personal to us, it is personal to Him, and it is this intimate relationship that we have this instruction given to us in.

And so we are supposed to think of it as very close to us. The law is something that is given in love, not as a way to burden us or constrain us. It

is so that we can live together. And so what does it do? It says it is perfect or it is complete. It is all-encompassing, is another way to put it. I believe that that is actually a good modern translation of this word. That the law of the Lord is all-encompassing. It applies to everything; it applies to our whole life. And so what does it do? We have here converting the soul. That word is actually better "repenting the soul." It is changing it. Converting is good, but this implies the whole process of repentance, and coming around and becoming complete.

I have a note here. I want to make sure I pick it up here. That is the word refreshing. That is another idea that is within this converting. Do you remember the John 3, where we are born again? Because He comes into our lives and we become a new being spiritually? Well, that is the idea here. That when He comes into our life, He refreshes us. He renews us. It is like, in a way, the New Testament term "regeneration." We are becoming new, all new by the work of the law within us.

I do not want to go through all of these. I just want you to understand these major points about what God has given us through the law. And we are supposed to understand here that He has given us all of these things because He wants this relationship to be loving and intimate, and working toward the goal of coming into the image of Jesus Christ.

So, however He decides to teach us, whether it is through the law, or through precepts, or principles, or commandments, or fear, learning how to revere Him; whether it is through His judgments, whatever, usually it is all of them. I mean, He works with us maybe one way or the other, here and there, but by the end of our lives, He has worked with us through all of these various ways. But they are all there to help us learn the right way to live (verse 11), and also to avoid mistakes. "By them Your servant is warned," of the bad ways to go. And of course He wants to fulfill His purposes in us and give us our reward.

All of these things are in this section here about why the law is so important to us. So it is really a neatly made poem here. The overall idea is that while the heavens do not speak, but we learn about God. He has provided words in His law to instruct us fully and completely in His way of life. If we would look up into the heavens and learn about God, it would not be complete. We

would understand His power. We would understand that He is Creator. We would understand various other things about Him, but it would be incomplete. It would just give us a little bit of an idea about God.

He has provided us words in His law so that we can have a fuller, a more complete picture of what He is like and what He expects of us, and also what is awaiting us in the future through His promises and through the prophecies. So the words make what we see in the creation much more real, much fuller, more complete.

Then he gets on in verse 10, because of this, because of what He has invested in His Word, because of all the good things that He has put in His Word, these things are precious to us, they are priceless, and we should be desiring them like the tastiest of foods. And then verse 11 is kind of a transition verse to what He gets into in verses 12 through 14. I will just read 12 through 13. Actually, I think I will read verse 11 with it because you can understand the transition if it is there.

**Psalm 19:11-13** By them [the law] Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins. Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression.

The psalmist here, once he understands what is going on in the heavens and what is going on in the law, he has to respond, and that is what verses 11, 12, 13, 14 are. They are the response of a servant of God to Him and to these wonderful truths that he has been given through creation and through the law. And so, what does he do?

Well, he immediately realizes that, because of what he has seen in the heavens, that he is nothing compared to this Great God, and what he has seen in the law, that he is filthy compared to the standards that God has given him to live up to, well, he asked that he be forgiven. That is the first thing he figures out. That he does not come up to the standard. He is puny, he is weak, he is sinful, and not only is he sinful, we can expand this out that he is full of evil. Error is just coming out of him like sweat from his pores. He has got every thought wrong. He has faults that he is not even aware of. There

are just so many things about himself that are horrible in comparison to what God has revealed.

And so he wants to be cleared. He wants to be, as he says here, cleansed. He says, "Cleanse me from secret faults." He knows that he frequently strays. He wanders from the right way and he desires forgiveness. So he asks for cleansing, and cleansing goes beyond mere forgiveness. The idea underneath it here is to scrub him, to root out the evil, to purge him so that he does not repeat the errors. He wants it gone. He does not just want a legal forgiveness, if you will. He does not want God to just say, "I forgive you," although that is wonderful. His response is that he wants to change his life so that it mirrors God and the law. And so he asked God to work with him to clean him up, to the very heart.

If you want to just jot down Ephesians 5:25-27. That is what Paul says that Jesus Christ does with us, that He cleanses us through the washing of the water by the word. What he tells us there is that He purifies us completely. It is not just that there is a legal forgiveness, not *just*—that does happen. We are forgiven by God, but through the instruction of Jesus Christ through the church and through His working with us, we are washed by that water, through the Word—teaching. That is what helps us, along with our own efforts of striving to do what is right to root out what is wrong in us.

Back in chapter 19 of Psalms, we have him saying that in verse 14, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and Redeemer." He is saying very much like Romans 12:1, that what he does, what he is, is a sacrifice to God. He becomes a living sacrifice. And so he is dedicating these words of his in this psalm to God and asking that they be acceptable to Him.

Notice he calls Him my strength and my Redeemer. This is pretty important here; that He is the one who gives him strength. It is not on his own strength that he is able to do any of these things. It is only through the power of God, which we understand comes to us through His Spirit, that these things are able to be done. So He is our refuge, our Rock, the one that we run to and hide in in times of need. But He is also our Redeemer, and this is the word

*goel*, kinsman/redeemer. See, we are bringing it in close again. He is our kinsman and He is the one who will save us. This reminds me of Boaz. He was the kinsman/redeemer, the *goel*, which is a type of Christ.

That was our introduction to all of this again, so we get the themes right. So with these two major themes firmly in mind, we need to move on to the third primary theme of Book One and that is: trust in God or faith in God. Now, this is perhaps the most prominent theme among the 41 psalms of Book One because it is mentioned so often. It is just trust in God, be faithful, or however it is put. It is just said more often than the other two. The other two are kind of behind the scenes. They are there, but they are not mentioned blatantly.

This is understandable. Once you have these two major themes down, that we are being instructed by God and that the One who is instructing us is the Son—the Word and the Word—then what is the logical outworking of all of that? That we live by faith. That is our response. Since God does this for us, and since we have His law and we have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the next thing is that we start living like it, and the way we live like it is that we live by faith, we trust God. It is the obvious next step to having the law or having His instruction and having a personal relationship with Christ.

Let us go back to Psalm 3. I just want to quickly go through this one. This can be a very encouraging psalm for us in light of what is going on now in this nation. There has been a sea change in the sentiment against Christianity in this country. And it was hard enough in the last few years, realizing that we are a minority. But now it is beginning to look like we are in a very quickly-shrinking minority. It is getting worse and worse. The number of people who think like we do, even generally, is diminishing all the time and these times may well end in harassment and in persecution. I mean, it has happened before.

If we look at history, this is kind of how it all happens. And it is natural to feel picked on and distressed. No one likes being a victim. No one likes being the person that everybody else hates. No one likes to be the one that everybody is against. No one likes being disliked. No one likes being alone or feeling alone, even if they may not be alone. But what this psalm tells us is that we should not linger in such a state of despair. We have to get hold of

ourselves and start listing out the pros and cons, because really, as children of God, the pros far outweigh and outnumber the cons, if we will just take the time to stop feeling sorry for ourselves and think about what we have got on our side.

Keep a finger in Psalm 3 and let us go back to II Samuel 15 so we get the background to this. As the subscription on Psalm 3 says that this is what David was feeling. This is what he wrote when Absalom overthrew him.

**II Samuel 15:13-14** Now a messenger came to David, saying, "The heart of the men of Israel are with Absalom." So David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee or else we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword."

**II Samuel 15:30** [as he makes his way out] So David went up by the Ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up.

That is the background to this psalm, and that is essentially how it opens up here.

**Psalm 3:1-2** Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. Many are they who say of me, "There is no help for him in God."

I think I will stop there and just explain things. This is how David felt when he was overthrown by his son. David was in a low state. All of the signs were that he was in mourning, he was troubled, he was crying out to God. He could not see anything good coming out of this. Everything was going against him. And he saw that the people who were against him were increasing and increasing and his own followers were diminishing and

diminishing. Those he could trust were going into the woodwork. They were hiding. They did not want to be caught up in all of this that was happening between Absalom and David.

The situation to him looks absolutely hopeless and all indications that he could see at the time, and that anybody else could see at the time, was that God had forsaken him, just like all the people were forsaking him. He could, as it says here in verse 2, he could hear them, even if it was just in his own mind, like Jesus did when He was on the cross, and they were mocking Him. "Where is God now? Has God abandoned You? Even God can't help you now. You're done for!" That is what was ringing in His ears, this mockery. But notice how he turns this.

**Psalm 3:3-4** But you, O Lord, are a shield for me [or actually, all about me], my glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill. Selah

Think about that. Take that! Because that is exactly what he did. That mocking that he was hearing all around him made his blood boil. He turned their mocking into motivation. He replied to them in his own mind, "That's not true. God has not forsaken me. God has always been with me. He's protected me in every situation. He's delivered me out of every trouble. And when I cry to God, He hears me! I know He does!"

That prayer goes right to His throne and He acts. That is what he says here. "He has heard me from His holy hill." Where was that holy hill? That holy hill was Zion in the city of David. That is where he had just come from. That is where Absalom was ruling from. But what is David saying? "Who is Absalom? God is ruling from the holy hill. He's the king of Israel." That is the Son. That is the anointed Messiah. He is the One who is sovereign.

So, whatever Absalom thinks he is doing, it has got to get past God first. God is the one still in charge, even though it may look like Absalom is the one that is controlling things, but that is not true. The One who sits on His throne, on the mercy seat in that holy hill of Zion, He is the One that is making all this happen. So I can trust Him. And so what does he say?



**Psalm 3:5-8** I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people [Absalom could bring in millions for all that matters] who have set themselves against me all around. [It does not matter because he has got a line, a red telephone, if you will, that goes directly into the Holy of Holies. And he can say] Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God! For you have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly [He is talking about in times past. You have done all of these things, I know it. It is all there. It is history, it has happened. I can be certain that it is going to happen again.]. Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing is upon Your people. Selah

So what does he do? He has turned this all the way around. He says, "God is working out salvation here. I may have been kicked off my throne. I may have just a few people right now, but He's working out a deliverance here. Salvation is from Him. He's going to do what He is going to do. And you know what? It's going to cause blessing for His people."

For one thing, in this particular case, it got rid of a lot of rebels, cleaned house. Absalom, Ahitophel, and many, many others who were aligned with them. And so the rest of David's reign did not have the problems that it could have. God was setting things up for Solomon, among other things.

But this is how David thought. He said, "I'm going to have faith in this God who has done so much for me. I've seen it happen. It works every time. If I just wait on Him, if I just have faith that He'll come up with a solution, because His job is salvation. Salvation belongs to the Lord. That's what he does. He's good at it, trust Him. And no matter what it looks like, how bad it seems, He's going to make it turn out right, for the blessing of His people." So he said, "Ok, we can have faith. Let's not look at how it feels right now or what it's doing to me right now. But let's (as Ryan said today), get way up in the air, that 30,000/40,000 foot view and see what God is doing here and understand that He's got a lot more things under control than you think he has."

And so all you need to do is wait on Him, trust in Him. He is a shield. He is the One that lifts up our head. You understand what he is saying here? From verse 1, where he says, "Oh, how bad things are!" He turns around and he says by verse 3, "If I think about God, I'm not depressed anymore because He's the one that lifts up my head." It goes from here, Oh it's terrible to Hey, things are going to work out! You understand how that works? He turns us from depressed into exultant and we can think about glory, he says. "He's my glory!" Not only is He glorified and glorious, but He brings glory to us and there is glory in following Him. So He is going to make everything work out. Why should we be so sad? Be so dejected? Think that nothing is going to work out?

Do our pros and cons here. Oh, Absalom, terrible. (This is the cons side.) He has got my throne. We hardly have anything to eat. We hardly have any people. I am old. I do not go out and fight anymore. Who is going to help us? Oh, it is terrible. I have even got to walk up and over this mountain. It is bad.

And on the other side, what do you have on the other side, the pro side of the ledger? God. God. And God! That is all we need. Right? God outweighs every evil, every bad thing on the other side of the ledger. So if you trust Him, trust God to work things out, wait for Him, be positive, move forward. And that is what David did. He got over the mountain, he waited. God provided the people. He had done a few things. He sent Hushai in and Hushai made things bad for Absalom and Ahitophel. But you know, it all worked out and Joab even killed Absalom, which David was not going to do. "You did not follow orders," but it was what God wanted to happen. So God made everything work out even though David could not foresee how it would all work out in the details, but God made it work out.

So lift up your head, move forward. Trust God. Wait—wait for Him to act.

See how it works. These are how these psalms of faith work. There is time after time after time that there is some sort of thing happening in David's life. He is in a cave, he cannot get out. He is in the wilderness. He is being chased. Saul does this, somebody else does that. The Philistines are against him. Time and time again that bad things are happening and he gets a hold of

himself, and he says, "Look, I've got God on my side. If I just have faith in Him, He's going to provide the solution and deliver me." And that is how these work.

Let us go to Psalm 37. One of my favorites. I know it is one of Joe Baity's favorites because he always sings this song, "Wait and Hope and Look for God." But this is one of those special faith psalms, trust in God. But I picked this for a reason, not just because I like it, but because this psalm is different than the other faith psalms because those are usually psalms that follow a situation. And then David goes through his thoughts and the way he thinks about things and then he comes up to the conclusion that God is going to help him.

This one is an instructional psalm and it is very much like the Proverbs or like Ecclesiastes in certain spots, where it is wisdom being passed along. It is instruction, not necessarily a specific situation. So he is giving us ideas here about what we need to do, specifically when we are overcome or overwhelmed by how wicked everybody is or that you are having a personal trial involving a wicked person. And so what do you do?

Just on the format here, just quickly. Psalm 37 is an acrostic psalm like Psalm 119. That means that every other verse or so, in the Hebrew, the first word starts with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. So, verse 1 starts with aleph, verse 3 starts with beth, verse 5 starts with gimel, verse 7 with dalet, verse eight with hey, and on and on it goes through all 40 verses. It goes from aleph to tav, if you want to know. So A to T in the Hebrew language. It is a good way to organize and memorize the material. That is why it is an instructional psalm. It was something that people were supposed to memorize and be able to think about, meditate on, if they did not have a copy of the Scriptures available. This was something that was easy to memorize.

It breaks down into five sections. Verses 1 through 11 is basically, do not be concerned about the wicked. Verses 12 through 15 is, why the wicked are destined to perish. Then there is verses 16 through 26 which is, Hey, despite appearances, the righteous are better off. Then verses 27 to 33 David gives advice for the righteous and how to handle themselves. And verses 34 through 40 is a reminder that God is the One who gives help and salvation.

There are just a few things. I only have 10 minutes here, so I am not going to go through this forensically, try to give every little bit of detail because it is impossible to do in this amount of time. But I do want to hit some highlights here. Let me read the first 11 verses.

**Psalms 37:1-11** 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. Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret—it only causes harm. For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; indeed, you will look diligently for his place, but it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

This is probably the best known section of this psalm because it has a lot of good encouraging words there for us. But there are a few things that I would like to just bring to your attention so when you you read it again or study it again, you have some guidelines.

The first thing, right off the bat, it says, "Do not fret." That is a bad translation or let us just say it is a lacking translation. It is not wrong because worry is part of the equation when we have problems with wicked people. We are concerned about what will happen. But the Hebrew is different. This fret is inaccurate. The word in Hebrew is *charah*, and it means "to burn." It describes the hot burning of anger. It means to be strongly displeased.

Now, this is understandable because in earlier times in the English language, fret had a much stronger meaning. Back in probably the 17th century when the King James was translated, the word fret suggested being consumed with irritation about something that you did not like and it meant to be agitated, even to fume about things. So the word in English has suffered some semantic drift. Now it means just a worry or even a foolish worry. Why are you fretting? Things will get better. But it does not mean that.

What David is telling us here is not to become angry or even furious over the seeming success and power of evildoers, to be beside ourselves because we are down here and they are up there, and we are doing what is right and they are doing what is wrong and it just gets us furious. He said, do not do that. What you are really showing, as the next part of the verse says, is that you are being envious. It is your envy making you angry and we are not supposed to covet. We are not supposed to be envious of their position or their wealth. Do not let it get ahold of you like that. He is saying, put that off.

Notice, if you go down to verse 8 it says, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not [burn]." Why? Because it only causes harm. It is making your thinking screwy. You are thinking out of this rage at the wicked and you are going to destroy yourself and destroy your posterity, destroy your future. Those are the kinds of things that come out of wrath. Nothing good is going to come out of burning in anger and jealousy, envy, over something that evil people are doing. So he says, forsake that, put it aside, there are better ways. And what he says here in verse 3, there should be brackets here. It says, do not burn at evildoers, do not be envious of the workers of iniquity, and then verse 3, instead, "Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell on the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart."

He is telling you do something positive. Rather than getting all mad at these evildoers, do something right! Trust in God and continue to do good. We might say, leave what you cannot change, that is, that other person, in God's hands, and instead, focus on living the way of outgoing concern. You cannot do a thing to affect how people in this world are living, how they are gaining so much at your expense or at other people's expense, how they are climbing the ladder over the bodies of other people or whatever. You cannot change

that. There is nothing you can do. And so take that energy that you are putting into your anger into living out what God wants you to do, which is to be concerned for *them*, concerned for others, and trust God that this is the right way. That is what He starts off with. Trust God, and leave that other stuff to Him, and you go and do good.

Then he tells us here, as he goes on, he says, "Dwell in the land," meaning this is what God has given you, dwell within what God has given you. This is what He has provided, this is His providence for you. Dwell in that, live in that, live with that.

And then He says, "Feed on His faithfulness." Terrible translation. I think they tried to get close to it, but the Hebrew words actually mean "shepherd," in a verbal sense. "Shepherd faithfulness," which is a very interesting concept. It is like we are a shepherd out there and the sheep that we have are faithfulness sheep, and we are supposed to be tending them and bringing them out to the pasture or fattening them up, making them good for what sheep are good for: wool, food, what have you.

What he is saying here, we would put it in a different way. But, you know, David was a shepherd, of course, so he was going to think about sheep and shepherding. But we would probably say something more along the lines of "cultivate faithfulness," "cultivate loyalty," or even you can put "his" in there like the New King James has done here. And we are supposed to be cultivating the kind of faithfulness that God has for us, and for His way and His promises. So what he is saying here is, "Let's do our part of the covenant. Let's be loyal, let's be faithful to what we have told God that we are going to do."

So verse 4 urges us then to enjoy the life that God has given through His providence and we will ultimately receive what we know is best for us. What we know in our heart of hearts is right and good and best for us.

Now, there are more things like this as we go through. Maybe in my next sermon, I will pick up right here. But I want to go, in closing, to I Timothy 6. I just want to give you the overall understanding of what David is getting at in the Psalms about faithfulness. And we are to do the same thing in a New Testament context. In I Timothy 6, this kind of raises the stakes up to a New

Covenant Christianity's level. He is talking directly to Timothy here. But think of it in terms of yourself.

**I Timothy 6:11-12** But you, O man of God [or, O woman of God], flee these things [meaning the covetousness and such, we should be content with what we have] and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. [Is that not what David told us to do? Live the right way. Do good.] Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

You made a vow at your baptism to follow this way. You signed the covenant, you confessed it before those people who were witnessing your baptism and said that this is the way you were going to go. So commit to it. Fight the good fight. He says,

**I Timothy 6:13** I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate. . .

He was doing what He was sent to do. Even while He was on trial, He just kept on doing what He was supposed to do no matter what was coming at Him in terms of trials and persecution. He just kept on doing His work.

**I Timothy 6:14-16** . . . that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time [This is part of the waiting that we have to do, the patience that we have to show.], He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.