

Psalms: Book One (Part Four)

Delight in the Lord

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I have got a question for you this afternoon. Do you trust the government? There are a few laughs out there and a little bit of shaking of the head. If you said no, you are in agreement with a significant number of Americans, and it is actually a growing number of Americans. In August, 2014, a CNN-ORC international poll found that just 13% of Americans say they trust the federal government to do what it is right, at least most of the time. Only 13%! In more than 55 years of reporting in this same poll, which is taken yearly, this is the lowest figure recorded in the history of that poll. Thirteen percent trust their government to do what is right most of the time.

To give some perspective, when this poll was taken after the Watergate scandal in the 1970s, at least 25% of Americans thought the government did what was right, at least most of the time. So even after that nation-shaking controversy that we had there at that time, a quarter of the people still thought the government was okay. But now it is down to 13%. Only 10% of Americans say they never trust the government to do what is right, which is the highest percentage ever recorded. A vast majority, a full 76%, say they can trust government only some of the time, which is actually the second highest figure ever recorded for that question.

It is no wonder that these percentages are skewed toward distrust of government, because over the last years, I will not say how many years, it is a bit subjective the way that you interact with government, but it has consistently failed the American people just about on every front.

Now, where do I begin talking about all the failures of government? It would take me a long time. It would probably be easier to list the few areas in which they do trustworthy work. But I could not think of any. Even the military, which usually gets about the highest ratings of trust, has had its black eyes over the last few years, actually since probably the Clinton administration, at least because of such things as "Don't ask, don't tell,"

which the Clinton administration pushed into the military. The military used to be one of those places where young men would go with all the vigor of youth. And now it does not seem that the military has that flavor anymore. I will not get any more into that, but they have had problems in religious areas as well. Not letting the chaplains talk about God, they have to be very careful about what they say.

What about the Veterans Administration? They have been embroiled in a scandal over the last few years about how it treats the veterans in hospitals. Making them wait for months at a time, sometimes so long that they die before they get any kind of meaningful treatment, and they waste billions of dollars in the process.

It would be legitimate in my mind to say that the Department of Education has ruined American education. The EPA, the Environmental Protection Agency, has done more to suppress industry and private land use than any other agency that I could think of. You cannot even, like the guy wanted to put a pond in his property. No, you have to get the EPA out there to say yes or no. You want to drain an area of your property. No, you cannot do it until the EPA comes out there and tells you whether or not it is a wetland that needs to be protected, and so forth. The EPA has kept any new refineries from being built in this country since, I think, the sixties or something like that. It has been a long, long time since a new refinery has been built, even though our capacity for that sort of thing, all the oil we have under our nation is incredible and they are still finding more and more, but we cannot personally refine it.

I do not know if I should even talk about the National Endowment for the Arts. All they push, it seems, are crass, obscene, and blasphemous art. Congress, throughout all the beginning of the Obama administration, did not pass a budget. I think it was about six years before it even came, because the Republican Congress, just recently voted in, finally came up with a budget. The Supreme Court is letting us down, making some very ludicrous rulings on constitutional issues that look like for political reasons rather than simply to interpret the Constitution. And I do not really want to get started on the growing power of the presidency.

You know, you used to go into government class and they would tell you, you have three branches of government. You have the executive, you have the judicial, you have the legislative; and they are supposed to be one third of the government, each with separation of powers and checks and balances so that no one part of the government gets too strong. Well, that ship has sailed a long time ago. There is the presidency, and then there is Congress, and then there is Supreme Court; and you can see that now the President can sign an executive order or get one of his agencies to write some regulation and it goes in as law and Congress has to take steps to say yay or nay on those things by coming up with another bill that essentially takes away what the President said or they have to go to the Supreme Court and that takes years and years and years, and finally these things just go into effect and no one seems to care anymore.

Can we trust a government, such a huge government with just a massive bureaucracy? And they do not see us as anything but a number, a social security number, normally. Maybe they see us as a taxpayer. And that is bad because when they see you as a taxpayer, all they see is your pocket and they hope it has money in it to feed their programs. And a lot of times they just see us as a beyond-the-beltway rube. What do we know? We are not in the center of power and so we do not have much of a say.

Worse maybe than that is they see us as conservatives. Oh, horror of horrors! Somebody actually thinks that we should not be changing quite so rapidly. And worst of all, they see us as Christians and fundamentalists. Christians who believe that old Bible, what do we know, they say, and so they go and do whatever they want to do.

So with most laws and rulings and regulations going against us and against traditional American practices, how could we trust our government? It does not seem to have our best interests at heart and it does not, not by any means.

Government is power, government is force, and usually those who have power, who have force, will use it as much as they can to get what they want unless some other force impedes them. And so far no other force has been there in the United States to impede the taking of more and more power and freedom from the American people.

Now, let us compare the feds to God. That is an easy one. There is actually no comparison whatsoever. Our God does not change. He changes not, He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So He is a constant in our universe and when He says something, we can trust it. He is our Creator. From the beginning, He has had our best interests at heart and He has provided abundantly for us. He made this planet for us and prepared it for our use.

Do you know what the odds are of something like that happening by chance? Somebody figured it out, did the math from the figures that are known about how large this universe is and how many things are needed to be perfect in order to have even have life. Not just keep life going on this planet, but to actually have life. It was figured out it was 1 times 10 to the 60th power. That is an incomprehensible number. And this astrophysicist, Paul Davies, who came up with this number (I believe it was him), he had to put it in layman's terms for us. Maybe he had the mathematical, mental ability to figure what 1 times 10 to the 60th power was. But he said it this way, "That's like aiming an arrow at a square inch target at the other side of the universe and hitting bull's eye."

Let me think about other things about God. I mean, we hate paying taxes and we see the taxes getting higher and higher. We have more fees, we have more of these things that the government wants out of our pocketbooks. But God makes it pretty easy. He says "I want 10%." A tithe never changes. He never sends you a form. He just says, "I would like 10% please." And He leaves it up to you. But He says, "I want you to save another 10%." "Oh man, that's 20%!" Now He said, "OK, I want you to keep that money and use it for your own upkeep and enjoyment at the Feast." So you pay another 10th, another tithe, but it is for us so we can enjoy the Feast. Then He says, "Every third year in a cycle in seven, I'd like you to come up with another 10%. But that's not for you. It's for those people who really need it, who really need a hand up, for those widows and orphans and others who are going through rough spots in their lives." And that is not too onerous. We can do it.

You know why it feels onerous? Because you have the federal government with its hand out asking for, depending on your income, 7%, 15%, 28%, 39%. Just depending on your tax bracket. You add those figures in with the

tithes that God wants you to give. . . Oh, and I did not mean to leave out your state taxes which are also going up and local taxes which are also going up and your property taxes, they always seem to go up. So you add all those things together and you only have 25%-30% after all that. I believe the state, local, and federal tax burden is over 50% now, is it not? Or it is very close depending on your tax bracket, of course.

But God's way is very simple, very straightforward. And it is a rate that never changes, something that we can prepare for. We could go through Psalm 103 (and we will not do that today because I did that last Atonement when we were going through Book Four), but that is the psalm that lists all the benefits of God because God does not just take our tithe. He *gives*. He gives us so much more back than we give in tithes that there is no comparison.

The psalm shows that we can trust Him for forgiveness of sin. How much is that worth? He heals all our diseases, it says. He promises deliverance from peril. He gives us mercy. He bestows love. He provides food and all of our other physical needs. He gives justice. He provides a ton of knowledge and we can go on and on with all the things that He gives. But those are some of the ones that are named in Psalm 103 of the benefits of having a relationship with God. Those are benefits that have no price tag. They are beyond price. They are riches that we cannot buy, as one of Isaiah's prophecies says, I believe it is chapter 55.

He gives us all these things and we do not have to pay for them and they are the most precious things in the world. His promises are sure because every word comes to pass. He sends no word out there that will not come back to Him having fulfilled what He sent it to do.

But most of all, He has given us a Savior, and He has given us grace, and He has promised us eternal life, and He has given us a down payment on that, and He has given us a Kingdom. In short, He has given us salvation. What has your government done for you?

Now, this is the essence of Psalm 118:9. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." Many of the psalms of Book One contain the theme of faith or trust in God. And the reason for that is that the

circumstances of David's life, which many of these early psalms relate, required him to exercise faith. He had to learn all the things that God does for Him through hard experience. But God was kind enough, merciful enough to us, gracious enough, to allow David to have the intellect and the creative capacity to put these into the Psalms so that we could have memorable ways of learning about these things and not having to go through them yourselves.

How would you like to traipse surround the Judean wilderness for years trying to stay away from a bloodthirsty king who wanted your head, and having near miss, after near miss, after near miss on his life? But David had to experience those things firsthand and then he had to think about them. He had to think about what God had done for him, he had to consider the lessons to be learned from those experiences with God, and he put them in this book for us to learn them the easy way, just by reading them. And of course, we have our experiences, we have our trials, but I do not think any of us have had to run from King Saul.

So this idea that comes through, that it is better to trust in the Lord, comes through in David's psalms time and time and time again. Sometimes he will not say necessarily, my faith is in God or trust in the Lord. He will not put it that way. It will come across in the experience of the whole psalm where it becomes very clear that he trusted God to solve his problems for him, to fight his battles for him, to provide a way of escape. And that is what I would like to turn to right now because this promise is for us as well.

I Corinthians 10:13 [you probably know it by heart or at least know it by sight] No temptation has overtaken you except as is common to man; but God is faithful [That is the first thing we have to understand about this theme. It is we can have trust in God, we can have faith in Him.], who will not allow you to be tempted [or tried] beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

God gives you the trials that are common to man. It is the kind of trials that everybody has. Now they will not all be the same, but they will be similar: problems with the spouse, problems with the parent, problems with a kid, problems with an employer, problems with someone down the street, a

neighbor, someone who shares a boundary with us. Problems of one nature or another. Problems with money, problems with just about anything and everything.

But it is this kind of problem that just about everybody comes across at least once in a lifetime where you have to work things out. And in our case, where you have to trust God to make the way of escape plain to us and then have the faith to take it. Because (this is something that I have learned in going through some of the Psalms myself), God *does* provide a way of escape. And it is sometimes very clear what that way of escape is. But it is hard. It takes faith.

If you really want to win the trial, as it were, you want to overcome, you want to make sure you move through the trial into the good time beyond, you are going to have to exercise faith. If you are going to take God's way of escape, then you are going to have to do the hard thing. It usually involves patience and sacrifice. You will probably lose something by going in the way of escape, the way of faith that He provides, whether that is money or reputation or what have you. Usually, the answer to the problem is to be humble and to show love for the other party.

The essence of love is sacrifice. And so you take the lower seat, you give in. Those are hard things. They take faith in order to do what God would want you to do in showing faith.

So David here in Psalms, Book One, frequently exhorts us to trust in the Lord (we should always trust in the Lord), but he wants us to especially trust in the Lord when life leads us into circumstances beyond what we think we are able to handle. That is where the rubber meets the road, as it were. When we are in a situation we think is beyond us. God, obviously having put you there in that situation, does not think the situation is beyond you, does not think that you will fail.

God never thinks that we are going to fail. He is confident that when He puts us into a trial that we are going to be able to overcome it. "I put all of this stuff into your hand so you can use it," knowledge, Holy Spirit, the example of others, and we can go on and on with things that He has provided; His own encouragement, notwithstanding all those other things, and He says,

"You can do it!" So He is confident that you can overcome this trial. That is when we have to think, "Ok, if I've been put into this trial, and I believe God has led me into this ditch, as it were, then He thinks I have the strength of character, the faith, and whatever I need to get out of it. I just need to trust Him."

None of this is easy. It is easy for me to say; it is hard when we are in the midst of it. But we come up with example, after example, after example, in these first psalms in Book One, or actually most of them, it seems like in Book One, are about something like this where David did that. He trusted God and God gave him what it took to overcome and to come out the winner on the other side.

We started with Psalm 37 last time. I only got into it briefly so I want to go back to Psalm 37 and use this as kind of a template for these kinds of psalms. So we are going to go back right into Psalm 37 and look at it more fully. Some of this will be review because I did spend some time on it. But I think Psalm 37 is important enough for us to go over in a detailed way.

Remember when I introduced this psalm last time I told you it is an acrostic psalm. Acrostics are simply, the first line of every other verse or so starts with the next Hebrew letter. So the first word in the first verse starts with an A, Aleph, and then a couple verses down, the first word in that verse starts with a B, Beth, and then the next one down a couple verses, it starts with a D, Daleth, and then Gimel, and then on and on it goes throughout the entire Hebrew alphabet, A to Tau, T. This is a lot like Psalm 119 which has sections that are acrostics.

What this does is it makes them very easy to learn. Not for us, because we speak English, not Hebrew, so it does not work for us that way. But because this was made as an acrostic shows that it was a teaching psalm. It was one that the writer of the psalm, which it says here is David, wanted to be easily memorized so that we could take these points with us. So point A would be the first couple of verses, point B would be the next few verses, point D would be the next few verses, and so on. And we could remember them because we know they are in ABC form.

Modern scholars say the thought of this psalm actually breaks down into five sections, not just the 22 little sections that start with the acrostics, but five major sections. And I want to give these to you. I gave them to you last time, but they are important because we are going to organize our going over this in this way.

So the first 11 verses, 1 through 11, is essentially an exhortation *not to be concerned about the wicked*. Verses 12 through 15 gives us the reason why we are not to be concerned, *the wicked are destined to perish*. And then from 16 to 26, eleven verses there, he says, despite all appearances, *the righteous are actually better off*. The fourth one, verses 27 through 33, he gives us some advice. *This is advice for the righteous*. And then the final section, verses 34 through 40, gives us some encouragement. *God gives help and salvation*.

We are going to go over each one of these sections in turn, starting with verse 1. The first one, verses 1 through 11, do not be concerned about the wicked.

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 your 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.

As I mentioned last time, we got through a good part of this section. But most translations begin this psalm, as the New King James does here as, "Do not fret." And that is not a terrible translation at all. It is not wrong. We need to understand that when we enter into a trial that we are going to worry, worry is part of the equation. But to make this part of the scripture here is inaccurate, if nothing else.

The Hebrew word behind fret, or do not fret, is *charah*, and it does not mean to worry or to be anxious. It means "to burn." So literally, David is starting off this this psalm by saying, "Do not burn because of evildoers. That is a bit stronger than "Do not fret," especially as we understand the term today. What *charah* does is describe the hot burning of anger, to be strongly displeased. It can even mean to be furious.

Sometimes when you are looking wherever it is, around your neighborhood or you are uptown and you see the people driving by in their BMWs and their Mercedes Benz, or I saw a Tesla here in Ballantyne yesterday (I passed them). But you think, man, I wish I could have something as nice as that, and you start thinking about it and you can start to get angry that things have not gone your way. What do these people have that I do not. I put in my time and I give to this and that, I do my charities. I do whatever it is. I have tried to succeed and I just cannot seem to do it, but they just seem to do it so easily. They have all the right connections. They go to all the right schools. It is *who* they know, it is not *what* they know. I am just as good as they are in whatever it is the field, but they have to get all the breaks.

And David is telling us here, do not let yourself get into that attitude where you are burning in anger, burning in envy. He goes on to say. "Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity." He is speaking to Christians here, to righteous people. People who are trying to find God, people who do not cut corners, people who do not take the easy way. People who do not give people bribes or whatever it is to get what they want to do. They do not stab people up the ladder to get to their position. He says they are evildoers, they are workers of iniquity, and you should not be getting furious, getting angry that they seem to have more advantages than you have, that they have more wealth than you have, that they have an easier access to various things than you have. Do not let that get under your skin and make you angry.

Fret is actually part of this, because we do worry about it. But in earlier times, our word fret was much stronger and it did have this idea of a kind of a burning anger of something having gotten under our skin and we are now consumed with irritation about someone or something that you did not like. That is what fret used to mean. It meant to be agitated, even to fume. But, as I mentioned last time, this word has suffered semantic drift over the centuries and now it just means worry or even needless worry or foolish worry.

So when you see this in Psalm 37, whichever translation you are using, understand that when the word fret comes up, and it does come up a couple of times, that it really means burn, and burn in anger. He is really talking about a much, much more raw emotion than just simply worry. So, David is telling us not to become angry, not to become furious over the seeming success and power of evildoers.

And that word "seeming" is very important. They may *seem* right now to be having the times of their lives, all the money, all the power, all the access, all the breaks. They *seem* right now to be on top of the world. We should not be envious of their position and the wealth that they have gained through sin because most of them have gained their wealth through some sort of sin, if only by breaking the Sabbath. They may have not done anything like killed a rival or bribe somebody or done anything like that, but along the way, they have done all these things without acknowledging God on the seventh day. And so their achievements have been done through sin because breaking the Sabbath is a sin.

Even something simple like that, people will say, "I'm a good person. I didn't sin." But did they go to class on the Sabbath or did they work on the Sabbath to get to where they are? They did this through sin. A person who is in the church does not avail himself of working on the seventh day because he believes that he should give honor and glory to God on that day. It is God's time and so he does not use it for his own promotion. So that is one area in which they have gotten where they are through sin, where the Christian cannot go and still remain in a good relationship with God.

So this includes a whole lot more people than you might think. It is not just the ones who are terrible sinners who have gotten on top by death or murder

or whatever. This is talking about the average person in the world who has gotten where he has gotten by ignoring God and just doing whatever he needed to do to get to that point. So understand that they have done this totally without God. They do not have really any knowledge of God and the knowledge they do have about God is skewed. They have gotten where they have gotten in sin and so their success is not backed by God. And because their position and whatever is not backed by God, then it is certain to fail at some point. It is going to come to nothing.

That is what we have seen in this whole thing. Verse 2, "They shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb." This is a very common image in the Bible of grass that grows up and it seems to flourish. It may put out its wildflowers and look beautiful for a short time. But the sun comes out, the east wind comes off the desert, and they wither and die, and they may only last a day or two or a week, but they soon are cut down like the grass. And he says, men who succeed without God in their lives are like that grass. Their success is going to be very short-lived because God is not in it.

This is why he says instead, in verse 3, "Trust in the Lord and do good, dwell on the land and feed on His faithfulness," because that is the right path to take. Trying to build your life as a successful one on God and going His way because that is the way that is ultimately going to prove successful and eternal. Whereas the other way, the way that looks so good on the outside, is actually, in the end, going to ultimately prove futile, vain, worthless, dead. So, we might say his exhortation here to trust in the Lord and continue to go to do good here, he says, "Forget about those guys, forget about these ones that you have been envying, you've been looking at, and they have their Tesla and they have their Mercedes Benz, they have got their nice mansion or whatever in the best part of town. Forget about them, forget about all that. Leave it in God's hands because you can't change it."

Leave what you cannot change in God's hands because He is going to have more success with them than you will in bringing them to their senses or to bringing them down or whatever it happens to be, whatever they need. And what we should be doing in the meantime, when we give all that over to God and leave that in His hands, we should be focusing on living the way of outgoing concern. That is what it says. "Trust in the Lord." Leave it in His hands and do good. Those are your marching orders. Do not worry about

them. You should be putting all of that emotion into a positive direction of doing good. And that is going to actually get you a whole lot farther than any kind of burning anger against those people who appear to be successful.

Now, this is where it says here in verse 3, "Feed on His faithfulness." It is a really interesting term. How do you feed on God's faithfulness? I guess you could figure out a way, but it is more picturesque when we use what the Hebrew actually says. It is better rendered as "shepherd," as in shepherding sheep. "Shepherd His faithfulness."

I have a note here. This is the more more literal way of rendering it. We might put it in another agricultural way as in "cultivate faithfulness." Shepherding gives us the idea of leading and guiding and caring for. Cultivate gives us the understanding of growing and making more fertile, making things bear fruit. So both of these work.

The actual metaphor has to do with shepherding, as in sheep. But maybe we can think of it better as cultivating. And it is faithfulness, which has to do with loyalty. This is kind of getting back to the idea of our covenant with God. We have made an agreement with God and He is loyal to the agreement He made with us. He never fails. And so what we have to do, because we are the party that is most liable to fail in keeping the terms of the covenant, we have to cultivate or shepherd ourselves in growing in faithfulness so that we, at some point, approach the faithfulness of God—Him to us and us to Him.

That is our goal; to be as loyal to our agreement with God in the covenant as He is to us. And so we have to kind of guide ourselves along this path of loyalty to the covenant or we have to start to cultivate the ground that we are planted in and begin to produce fruit, which means we have got to show our faith.

If you want to put it in school terms, learn to trust God and do whatever it takes so that when the test comes, you have the right answer and you will pass the test. But it is not something that we are just going to have when the trial comes without any kind of preparation. We have got to be doing this faithfully every day in the small matters. He that is faithful in little will be faithful and much. So we need to be cultivating these small areas of faith and growing them until it comes to the big tests and trials where we pass them

very easily because we have been cultivating, shepherding this faithfulness to it all along.

Verse 4, "Delight yourself also in the Lord." This takes it a step further than what could seem to be just drudgery having to learn to do this. He adds on top of this, that while we are doing this, we need to be taking great pleasure in God and His way. We have to have a positive attitude as we are shepherding His faithfulness and realizing all of the wonderful things that God does for us and gives to us. We can delight in Him. We can have a great deal of joy and pleasure in this way of life because it is not very long before we will be able to compare ourselves side by side to the wicked and say, "Wow, I've got a relationship with my wife that's wonderful and we are growing in happiness, and this guy has been divorced three times. This guy's Tesla broke down 15 times last year and my old bucket of bolts is still going strong."

Those are ways we can say, "Look, God is with me. God is working with me. God sees what I'm going through." It is not that He hates this other guy, but this other guy is ignoring God. And so God gives him over to his own ways and he has to bear with the consequences of that. And he has problems. Usually it is relationship problems. They do not get along with people, they do not get along with their bosses, they do not get along with their neighbors, they do not get along with their kids. Your kids may be wonderful and going strong and doing all the right things, but his are on drugs or in jail or whatever.

You get the point here. You can see over just a short amount of time that his way does not work. God's way *does* work and that should give you great delight in the Lord when you see Him working and blessing you and giving you, as it says at the end of verse 4, "the desires of your heart," what you really deeply want inside. And he is not talking about the big home, the nice car, the nice duds, or whatever. He is talking about the things that you really, really want: good relationships, kids that obey, kids that succeed, that sort of things. Those are the real desires of our heart. And God is willing to give those things to us. If we trust in Him and do good, they are kind of like automatic.

He goes on and says in verse 5, "Commit your way to the Lord." Now, when we see that word commit, we usually think maybe like, I think I am a sports guy. I like to follow sports, and guys coming out of high school commit to a college that they are going to play for. So somebody will say, "I'm going to commit to Florida State," or "I'm going to commit to Colorado," or "I'm going to commit to" name your school. And what they do is they sign a paper that says I am going to go to this particular school, and receive a scholarship from the school, and play football for the school, or whatever the athletic program is. So we normally think of committing in terms of saying something, by your signing something.

But that is not the idea behind, "Commit your way to the Lord." It is something that is much more active. The word here behind commit is "rolling away." It is actually "roll away your way to the Lord." It is kind of a difficult thing. You can understand why they translate it as "commit your way." But it has the sense of you not only saying with your mouth that you are going to do what God wants you to do, but following it up with practice. So it is not only that you *say* you are going to do it, but that you *actually do it*. You commit yourselves by putting yourself into it wholeheartedly and you start rolling away the things that do not fit along God's way.

And so you begin doing things like roll away the bad attitudes that he talked about in verse 1, roll away the anger that is going to show God that you are committing to Him and to His way by not sinning in anger. Roll away the envy. You just get rid of it, get it out of your life because that is not part of God's way. Anger and envy are not godly things, especially used in this way. Envy, certainly not. Anger can be, but not this kind of anger. This kind of boiling under the surface anger where you are just getting upset about the other person. That is not the way of God. So you are getting rid of the attitudes that do not fit with the way of God. And in this sense, you are plunging into His way of life completely.

Then it follows this up with, "Trust also in Him." This has the sense of "rely totally on Him." That is why I used "plunge into completely," because it is this idea of getting rid of the bad things and putting on the good things so that you are fully committed to His way of life. And this is kind of a touch on the theme of Unleavened Bread in Book One. One of the themes, of

course, being spring and the Festival of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Unleavened Bread is all about getting rid of the bad and putting on the good. And this verse is basically saying that, "Roll away the bad, all those things that aren't in the way of God, and put yourself completely into the way of the Lord doing the good things."

Let us go on to verse 7. "Rest in the Lord." This is another area in which they did not translate it very well. Rest in the Lord does not really mean rest. You could probably have figured that out from commit. Commit is not something that is done passively. It is done actively. "Rest in the Lord" should not give us the impression of taking our ease. That is not at all what it means. The Hebrew says, "be still" or "be silent," one of the two. They have a similar idea of being still or being silent in the Lord. And it is something that is very hard for us to do, being still in the Lord.

Notice that right after that, it says, "wait patiently for Him." Those are supposed to be taken not as two different things. They are the same thing. "Rest in the Lord" or be still in the Lord and "wait patiently for Him" are the same action. So when it says here, "Rest in the Lord," it is saying, wait for God to act, be patient. Do not go where angels fear to tread. Another way we could put it is, relinquish control of the situation, because usually when we get into a trial, we try to manipulate it, and that is a natural thing for human nature to do because human nature wants to control its environment.

But David says here, do not worry, do not fret, do not get angry, do not be envious. Commit yourself to God. Do good, trust in Him. Do all these things that you can to put yourself on God's side and have a good attitude and go about your daily life doing what God wants you to do, and let Him work. Because if you try to get into the middle of that situation and work it out yourself, odds are about 95% that you are going to make it worse, especially in these deeply spiritual trials that we are going through. Wait patiently for Him basically instructs us not to meddle or to try to take action or use words to solve the problem, particularly in these situations where you have these evil people, because that is basically the trial that he is talking about. Where you see someone who is seemingly succeeding but doing it the wrong way, and it makes you angry.

So he is saying you just take care of yourself. Leave them to God, do not try to get involved and bring that other person down. Let Him do the work for you. You just get out of the way and do what God wants you to do, which is mostly get your attitude right at this point. Because remember, we started out fuming and envious. That is what He wants us to do, to get rid of the bad attitude and start thinking about what God wants him to do.

The sense is here, let God take the lead. You follow; and He will guide us to our inheritance, the best route for us. And it is probably not going to be the way that follows that bad guy that you have been envying. It is going to be an entirely different way. So what he is saying here in verse 7 that we need to do is basically relinquish control, and that is so very hard to do. So be patient. As he says here, one day we will look for that evil person and he will not be there. That is the second time this idea has come up already in the first about seven verses that he says, just give it some time. That person that you were burning in anger over and envious over will not be there in a short amount of time or will not be in that position.

So just just give it some time. Remember, God works in a time that is, in a way, not like ours. And if we give Him some time to work, He usually works things out pretty nicely and handily. But we want things done right now! "God strike him down with some lightning out of heaven!" That is not how He works. He will bring that other person down in His own time and it will be quicker maybe than we think.

But that is not our concern. Our concern is our own attitudes and our own commitment to God. So, as he says here, going into verse 8, "Cease from anger, forsake wrath; do not fret [do not burn about these things], it only causes harm." You are doing harm to yourself, you are undermining your own character. So put those things out, roll them away. "Evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth." Let us look at this in the long term, guys. If we wait on the Lord, we are going to be on top in the end. And where will that other person be? "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."

Remember what meekness is? Remember the illustration I gave in my sermon on meekness last winter, about that great wide river rolling down from the mountains, wherever it had come from, wherever its source is, but it is so wide and it is so strong, little rocks, even big boulders do not bother it. It just keeps rolling forward. It goes around the rocks, it goes over the rocks, it does not try to destroy the rocks. It just flows on and does not let those things that would seem to be obstructions to get in its way.

So he said, if you are like that in your attitude, where you do not let these people, these wicked, these ones who others might envy, do not let them get under your skin. Just be calm and roll on. It is those kind of people that God wants; those kind of people will inherit the earth. And it says here "and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." It means that, in the end, we will not have that burning anger, we will not have that envy. But we will have not just an abundance of peace, the image is of an overflowing, super abundance of peace. We will be steady as a rock, life will be good because we have done what God wanted us to do.

That is the first section. I think we can go through these other sections a lot more quickly.

Psalm 37:12-15 The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him, for He sees that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, to slay those who are of upright conduct. Their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

This kind of harkens back to Psalm 2. Remember what God did there? He laughed at them in derision for their plans, for their plots against Him. And that is what He does here. "The wicked plots against the just, gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him." Why does the Lord laugh at them? Because He can see what is happening. His view is not obstructed by time. He knows how things are going to work out and He just laughs at these people who think that they have got the tiger by the tail and they are going to go and do all these wonderful things, and they are going to plow right through all these stupid Christians and whoever else, and you know, they are

going to be the big guy. They are going to be the ones in power. And God just laughs at them because He knows that they, in a few years, are going to have killed themselves, destroyed themselves.

Why do they destroy themselves? Well, out of sin. The wages of sin is death, and because they are touching the apple of His eye and He knows that He is going to work out that their plans fail. And so this is a perspective we need to have. He knows the end from the beginning and we can know it too, that the evil are going to perish and their plans are going to come to nothing. So we can take a breath. We do not have to get all uptight and bothered about these things. We know that in time, if we wait patiently, they are going to fail. So we just need to go forward. The day of reckoning is drawing near for them and we just need to wait for them to self destruct.

Psalms 37:16-22 A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous. The Lord knows the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. But the wicked shall perish; and the enemies of the Lord, like the splendor of the meadows, shall vanish. Into smoke they shall vanish away. The wicked borrows and does not repay, but the righteous shows mercy and gives. For those who are blessed by Him shall inherit the earth [that is the second time he said that], but those who are cursed by Him shall be cut off.

It just repeats, repeats the same idea over and over: the righteous, if they do what God says, if they stay in His way, they are going to be blessed, and any kind of bad thing that happens, it is not going to affect them to the point that it affects everybody else. And then they are looking at these people who seem to have so much, it is going to end, they are going to be cut off, they are going to die, they are going to self destruct. These ideas are given to us constantly so we get it. Understand what he is saying here. If you are on the right side—God's side—if you have faith in Him and trust Him to get you through your life in a way that is going to produce a meek, quiet person who trusts in the Lord, that is all you need.

Psalm 37:23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights [*He* delights, God delights] in his way.

He is happy for us when we do what we are supposed to be doing, when we allow God to guide us through life. And He takes great pleasure in our growth and our success.

Psalm 37:24-26 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down [Not like the wicked. They are going to be utterly cast down]; for the Lord upholds him with His hand. [You talk about a blessing! To know that if you fall, you fall into God's hand and He sets you back on your feet.] I have been young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lends; and his descendants are blessed.

So even though the righteous person on the outside may not seem to have very much of worth that he can say "that is mine" and "this here is mine," but God sees their end. God sees their trajectory and knows that they are going to land in His Kingdom. His way, His path is the way that leads there. And so he says that with His sustaining power, they are going to end up with an eternal inheritance. How much greater is that than this silly person with his Tesla and his nice house; and all of that is going to be destroyed or someone else is going to own it, or it is going to break down. But this person, the righteous person who goes God's way, is going to end up in God's Family. He is going to have an eternal inheritance.

Now, there is one thing here in verse 18, it says here, "The Lord knows the days of the upright." Normally in the Old Testament we think of this in terms of somebody who does the law. But that is not exactly what this word means. It is righteousness, yes, but it does not imply righteousness through works. It is blamelessness because of what God does. In other words, it is grace. He is righteous through God's grace, through the righteousness imputed to him. And what we can take from this is that since the destiny of the righteous depends totally on God because He is the One that grants us righteousness and grace, we had better have faith in Him for everything. We cannot save ourselves. That would be foolish.

We could say that salvation is God's business. That is what He is trying to do. He is trying to save us. And so our works to try to save us may be, well, they are futile. The real salvation comes through God. Now, we still need to show Him that we are going to live properly and do what He says and obey His commands. That goes without saying. But He is the One that is going to save us. And so if He is the One that is going to save us—it depends on Him—then we had better trust Him all along the way. So there is a great deal to be gained by trusting God. It goes all the way into the Kingdom.

David now turns in verses 27 through 33 to some advice.

Psalm 37:27-31 Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore. For the Lord loves justice, and does not forsake His saints; they are preserved forever, but the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell it in it forever. [This is the third or fourth time now that has been said.] The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of justice. The law of his God [Remember Torah, the instruction of God, is one of the themes of Book One. Here it shows up in verse in Psalm 37, the law of His God.] is in his heart;
...

Notice it is in his heart. It is not just something that is on tablets of stone or something he touches as he goes in and out of his house. This law has been inscribed on his heart and out of the abundance of his heart not only does his mouth speak, but his actions show up in righteousness.

Psalm 37:31-33 . . . and none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous and seeks to slay him. The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. [That is God working for us when we go into trial.]

Verse 34, this is what we need to do, David's advice for us. And he shows us here what God is going to do. This is the part: God gives help and instruction.

Psalm 37:34-40 Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land [there it is again]; when the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a native green tree. Yet he passed away, and behold, he was no more; indeed I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark [meaning watch, regard, pay special attention to] the blameless man, and observe the upright [remember, these are the people that God has chosen and given His righteousness to, and given grace to]; for the future of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together; the future of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them [Why? This is the theme that we have been getting to this whole time], because they trust in Him.