

# When Life Is Unfair

## WHAT GOD SAYS...

### THE READING OF THE WORD

Psalm 37:1-9

Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.[b] Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.

### Warm Up

My name is Eric Mattie and serve as one of the elders here at LEFC. I'm stepping into preach for Pastor Dan as he was on vacation this past week. We will be taking a break from our sermon series on the book of John.

Today we will have a one off message titled "What God says... When Life Is Unfair." And what God say is foind in our reading of Psalm 37

### Introduction

The words of the Psalter are either about Christ or by Christ. Psalm 37 is characterized as a book of wisdom.

- If we as Christian live out the commands of Scripture and heed the command in James that implorues us that "if we lack wisdom ask for it" (Js 1:5), then just one the generous ways God has given it is through Psalm 37.
- We will only mine just a few of the verses- 1-9 for our purposes here. But there is a lot here.

Psalm 37 is an instructional poem in the wisdom tradition. It is designed as an acrostic, which takes the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and begins that line with that letter. In particular this acrostic poem lays out every two line in that manner, mostly. This beautiful manner in Hebrews doesn't translate over to the English. But it was designed to way in to help the Israelites memorize and to be reminded or prompted of what God says.

When life seems unfair and we have the seasons where we are **struggling, stressing, and sleepless**. We need reminders of what God the author of life says. It is usually

through these times it is not wise for us to be fine tuning or second guessing our theology and belief about God. Rather it should be the times we are reminding ourselves of the great truths.

And in this Psalm there are some great reminders for us. In the acrostic tradition, I've "attempted" to give us prompts, based on these verses that are aligned alphabetically. My hope is that it would help you remember God's word, even though you may not be the best Bible memorizer in the world. (Yet I would strongly encourage you to memorize this Psalm)

God's word in this psalm says 5 particular things when life is unfair.

Let's start with verse 1 and 2

### **Passage**

Psalm 37:1,2 Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.

### **Point**

## **A. ADOPT A LONG VIEW OF LIFE- AN ETERNAL VIEW.**

There is more to life than here and now

**Picture:** If I could give you a word picture

A friend of mine currently crocheting an afghan and he is at the point where one round is taking him an hour at a time. An afghan takes a lot of stitches to complete it. This part of our living on earth, is only one stitch length compared to the eternity of a fully hand crocheted afghan.

Our Born Again existence extends beyond the years here and in this body. Yet we struggle with the here and now.

**PREACH:**

When we look around this world we see people of questionable character prospering.

We see godless nice people flourishing with no thought of Christ. Even our own neighbors may have the health and toys and status that we desire.

We see evil doers have things that our heart wants.

We are tempted to envy the freedom they have to indulge their lust and for us to throw caution to the wind and break conscious and do so as well

Do you see the connection? That when we begin to **look around** and concern ourselves about the world's standard and concerns, **we begin to fret**, we become bothered, troubled and agitated.

Then we **look within** our own hearts and see that green eyed envious monster that Shakespeare describes begins to mock us. We are then tempted to fret, and be bothered or troubled about God and his intention to us his children as if he's been unkind to us.

Why would we envy or think that life is unfair?

- Because the rich and famous seem validated in their riches and fame.
- The powerful seem to afford a life of ease and luxury.
- Our neighbors seem to have a better property.
- Our co workers seem to have better opportunities.
- Even our good friends seems to have happier lives than us.

**BUT ALL OF THIS IS ABOUT THE HERE AND NOW.**

PREACH:

God says here don't be envious of the evildoers.

Why? Because like the flourishing grass or green herb they will die out.

When we are tempted to look around and fret and envy and question, we are to actually **ADOPT A LONG VIEW OF LIFE- AN ETERNAL VIEW OF LIFE** and look forward with an eye of faith. When we are reasoning ourselves out of that doubt and we are meditating on God's truth in His word we will see no reason to envy the success or prosperity of the godless and evil doers.

Why?

Because what they have is fading and their idols will fail them even their perfect health will one day stop and their life will come to ruin.

- I have this quote in my office that says "the disturbing thing about the best this world offers is that it is all decaying."

God says Fret not- avoid concerning yourselves w/ evil doers and their wrongdoing. Adopt a long view of life- an eternal view. Set your mind on things above, not on things of the earth.

What else does God say when life seems unfair?

**Passage**

Psalm 37:3-4 Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

**Point**

## **B. BELIEVE IN THE SATISFYING AND FAITHFUL CHARACTER OF THE LORD AND STILL DO GOOD.**

Let me set my comments about this verse by recalling a Biblical picture:

In reading the prophet Habakkuk in the Old testament, it is really a record of his own struggles and faith rather than a direct public address to God's people.

He actually is complaining . His complaint includes

**Hab.1:3,4:**

Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong?  
Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.

- Sound familiar? Has our heart said this?
- Has any form of complaint or question like this every enter your mind or spoke within your circle of friends?
- Life during the exile of Israel seemed unfair. Partly because the people didn't want to understand the discipline of the Lord. Partly also because it was going on for so long
- Habakkuk understood that the breach of the covenant agreement brings judgement and discourse. But his concern was the Lords apparent lack of inactivity. It seems unfair
- Yet God answers when Habakkuk positions himself at his prophetic watchtower ready to here God's word. And the Lord answers with a vision and the famous comforting phrase in chapter 2:4: but the righteous will live by faith"

- It was comforting because God was saying there was going to be a remnant of people faithfully trusting- God's people will not be wiped out, alone or turning their back on their God.
- They will live and commune together and actually continue in their faithful obedience amidst an unfair world

Concerning Habakkuk's statement of the righteous will live by faith here in Psalm 37 we get how faith is lived out in the next few verses starting vs 3.

## **PREACH**

Trusting God...Do Good.. Delight In. this describes the motives, the concerns, the focus of the Christian that lives in a world that is unfair. Stop concerning yourselves what the tabloids and television says is inspirational living!!

- Don't allow the unrighteous action of others, to sway you in your conscious and say: "Forget it! Why obey, and stay faithful. I don't get rewarded for it." "Everyone else is doing why can't I" Surely God will forgive me" That where that adopting a long view of life comes in.
- When we set our minds on things above. We live out Pauls word in 1 Thessalonians 4:11,12

"and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, 12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders..."

- We believe in the satisfying and faithful character of God and still do good. We live to reflect a love for him first. We pursue our passions to be satisfied in him first. We ignore the envious calls of the world.

## **Preach:**

Power positions, placements, and possession all are subject to atrophy and waste, rust and moth. It will not satisfy

Truth is... C.S. Lewis was right:

"If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."

-C. S. Lewis

You maybe say ok Eric I've got the point about not desiring the world and envying the world. But what about other Christians.

"What if I struggle with envy of my fellow believer"

"What if I covet another believers blessings of material wealth or marital bliss or the momentary health they enjoy. What if they are more gifted than I am?"

## **PREACH**

When we believe in the satisfying nature of the Lord we can stir one another in love and good works as it says in Hebrews. We can stir them to live a life that glorifies God in their blessings because our delight is in God's glory not or own

### **When God is our delight -- do good with all our might.**

- Do good to one another and find your reward not in **your** spotlighted role but in your ability to reflect God's love and hope to a lost world and a weary church.
- We are never to let envy in the church to take root in our heart.
- Why? Because it leads to apathy in our Christianity both here and at home.
- It also leads to Bitterness in our hearts and stops us from serving each other and serving a needy lost world. The lost need to see the difference between the godly who act in true virtue of love and do good works and the sinful limited virtue of the godless. They need not see the envy backbiting nonloving so called Christian living a life no different then their own.

We are to reflect a greater delight in Jesus by loving him better than we did yesterday.

Every human being is designed to be satisfied in God and to delight themselves in God.

What God says when life seems unfair is to believe in his all satisfying nature by delighting His presence and his purposes. Seek first God and his kingdom first.

"Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us." Psalm 62:8

A faithful God is our refuge in this unfair life of troubles... our strength in our weakness... our inheritance we trust for the future.

**When we are called to do good. Its risky.**

God calls us to that risk. To love your neighbor as yourself, forgive and turn the other cheek, pray for your enemies.

Maybe we are to love the unlovable. Care for the annoying. And Bless the ones we feel don't deserve it.

How do we do that when we have this obstacle of risk involved?

Believe in his forever faithful character by trusting in him while you do Good and know that you will not be doing it in vain. We put our faith in his future grace remind ourselves of promises and mercies that are new every morning.

What else does God say when life seems unfair?

**Passage:**

**Psalm 37:5,6:**

Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.

**Point:**

**C. Cast all you life's affairs and business to the Lord who will act on your behalf.**

Literally in the Hebrew this says "roll the manner of your living unto the Lord"

**Point:**

God says back in verse 3 trust in the Lord and do good. Here HE is say trust in the Lord and he will act. So we are to do good. Not be idle or put our lives under a bushel and not shine. "Hide it under a bush oh no..."

But in doing good work for God's glory, leave the result for Him to act. To "do".

How will God act? Is he even acting?

The Lord will act for what is good and right. He will act according to what is best for his kingdom and purposes and for his glory. Also what is best for his children.

**Point:**

Can you trust the results of an unfair life... to God? God is saying here: Surrender your life and its life results to Christ. Shake off the burdens you put on yourself and on the result of your works.

**PREACH:**

{slow here eric}

Resist the negative pity party about failure, or loss or wanting.

Don't allow depression over the loss of a dream or wanting of something different place you in the neutral position of your life. Not moving or worshipping for Jesus.

Don't allow depression over a failure get you stuck in the mud spinning your wheels.

God, redeems, renews, restores. God has something special for you.

Repent of sins that hold you down. Cast away the chains of envy, bitterness, coveting, rivalry, resentment, malice.

**Point:**

We are to trust God to act the way Paul trusted God to act:

2 Timothy 1:8,

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, 9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, 10 and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 11 for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, 12 which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. 13 Follow the pattern of the sound words that



you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 14 By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

**Practical point:**

- Can you trust, that God will guard and act in your life at the right time that will best benefit you? I know that very human centric We shouldn't care if it benefits us. But If we lose out on that aspect of hope- it will affect our worship and loving God with our whole heart mind and strength. We will give up in serving and doing good and will just punch the Sunday morning clock. We will stop evangelizing our neighbors because sometimes it hurts too much. We will stop praying in faith
- It will not always be comfortable but we need to trust the Lord even for that result.

We need to trust that God will bring to pass the very unfair issues of this life--- all of it politically or personally. He will bring about the just result and will let it shine like the noonday sun. It will be -for his Children a satisfy, glorifying happy ending.

What else does God say when life is unfair:

**Passage:**

**Psalm 37:7**

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!

**Point:**

**D. Decide to cultivate a waiting and still spirit in the presence of God.**

When we are impatient it reveals what we truly love.

When we complain it reveals what we truly want.

Neither impatience or complaining is something we as human being have a tough time cultivating. But being still and waiting patiently for God to act, that takes a little bit of cultivating. The disciples felt they needed more faith before

they could be patient with another long term sinful person they had to forgive over and over again. Jesus said, based on the grace you've been given, even the size of a mustard seed, you don't need extraordinary faith. You need to remember the object of your faith, who is a great and just God!

In fact, God didn't give us His words this morning to just improve our self help concepts for theological bent people.

No.

He is calling us to recall: that when life is unfair, we are to relate to all of life not as orphans, but as chosen adopted children who can cultivate a relation trust to our heavenly Father, that will keep our eyes on the bigger prize of life then just ease and luxury. That bigger prize is the personal relationship we enjoy with Jesus.

All of these truths I've talked about require an affection for Him and His work and His glory outside of ourselves. We need to pray for God to work that in our lives.

What else does God say in His word when life is unfair?

Psalm 37:8

Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.

## **E. Eliminate anger in your heart and evil in your actions**

How easy is it that we can take up the example of the ungodly in times we see unfairness. It starts in the heart that becomes anger. Its spoken with the tongue and there are times its seen in our actions.

This verse points again to the connection between our pre-occupation with life's score keeping and how it can lead to evil. How murmuring can come to sin.

And we best be careful that we are not angered as Charles Spurgeon says: the arrangements of Providence and jealousies of the temporary pleasures of those who are so soon to be banished from all comfort."

- There are times we need to eliminate anger by saying “whatever” and allow not jealousy to rear its head.
- There are times we need to eliminate anger by remembering the Providence of God’s good common grace in others lives that we may need to just never fully understand why and be ok.

*The next point in the next verse is a late point in this message. Its so late that it not in your outline so here*

## **Psalm 37:9**

For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.

### **F. Faithfully Wait**

Since the word wait occurs three times in this overall Psalm- I feel that its importance in light of our wondering heart that covets and envies so much it warrants another point of emphasis.

I wish to read the following poem in closing to emphasize the point . It is called “WAIT” (Taken from “Follow Me!” by Russell Kelfer, copyright 1995)

Desperately, helplessly, longingly, I cried.  
 Quietly, patiently, lovingly, He replied.  
 I pleaded, and I wept for a clue to my fate,  
 And the Master so gently said, “Child, you must wait.”

“Wait? You say wait?” my indignant reply.  
 “Lord, I need answers, I need to know why.  
 Is your hand shortened? Or have you not heard?  
 By faith I have asked, and I’m claiming your Word.

“My future, and all to which I can relate  
 Hangs in the balance, and you tell me ‘wait’?  
 I’m needing a ‘yes,’ or a go-ahead sign,  
 Or even a ‘no,’ to which I can resign.

“And Lord, you have promised that if we believe,  
 We need but to ask, and we shall receive.  
 And Lord I’ve been asking, and this is my cry:  
 I’m weary of asking: I need a reply!”

Then quietly, softly, I learned of my fate

As my Master replied once again, "You must wait."  
So I slumped in my chair, defeated and taut  
And grumbled to God; "So I'm waiting, for what?"

He seemed then to kneel and His eyes met with mine  
And He tenderly said, "I could give you a sign.  
I could shake the heavens, darken the sun,  
Raise the dead, cause the mountains to run.

"All you see I could give, and pleased you would be.  
You would have what you want, but you wouldn't know Me.  
You'd not know the depth of My love for each saint;  
You'd not know the power that I give to the faint.

"You'd not learn to see through clouds of despair;  
You'd not learn to trust, just by knowing I'm there.  
You'd not know the joy of resting in Me,  
When darkness and silence was all you could see.

"You would never experience that fullness of love  
As the peace of My Spirit descends like a dove.  
You would know that I give, and I save, for a start,  
But you'd not know the depth and the beat of my heart.

"The glow of My comfort late in the night'  
The faith that I give when you walk without sight;  
The depth that's beyond getting just what you ask  
From an infinite God who makes what you have last.

"And you never would know, should your pain quickly flee,  
What it means that 'My grace is sufficient for thee.'  
Yes, your dreams for that loved one o'ernight could come true,  
But the loss! if you lost what I'm doing in you.

"So be silent, my child, and in time you will see  
That the greatest of gifts is to get to know Me.  
And though oft' may My answers seem terribly late,  
My most precious answer of all...is still...wait."

## WHEN LIFE IS UNFAIR

### WHAT GOD SAYS...

Psalm 37:1-7

**A. Adopt a long view of** \_\_\_\_\_

Vs 1,2

**B. Believe in the satisfying and faithful character of the Lord and still do** \_\_\_\_\_

Vs 3,4 Hab 1:3,4; 2:4 Psalm 62:8

**C. Cast all you life's affairs and business to the Lord who will** \_\_\_\_\_

Vs 5,6; 2 Tim 1:8,13

**D. Decide to cultivate a waiting and still spirit in** \_\_\_\_\_.

Vs. 7

**E. Eliminate** \_\_\_\_\_ **in your heart and evil in your actions**

Vs. 8,9