THE OUTLOOK OF THE GODLY AND THE UNGODLY

BIBLE TEXT: Psalm 37:1-40

MEMORY VERSE: “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace” (Psalm 37:37).

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Contrasts in the Outlook of the Godly and the Ungodly

1. The righteous need not be vexed by the prosperity of the wicked (Psalm 37:1, 2, 7-10, 20, 27, 28, 35, 36, 38)

Proverbs 23:17
17 Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long.

2. The righteous are exhorted to commit their ways unto the LORD (Psalm 37:3, 4, 5, 23, 24, 27, 34;

1 Samuel 2:9
9 He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

Isaiah 58:14
14 Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD: and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

3. The meek shall inherit the earth (Psalm 37:11, 18, 22, 29, 34)

4. The Lord shall laugh at the wicked for He seeth that judgment is coming, Psalm 37:17, 32, 33; 2:4;

Job 38:15
15 And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm shall be broken.

5. The righteous may have little, but they shall be satisfied in the day of famine, Psalm 37:16, 19, 21, 25, 26;

Job 5:20
20 In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword.

Proverbs 15:16
16 Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith.

Deuteronomy 15:8
8 But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.

6. The steps of the righteous shall not slide, Psalm 37:30, 31;

Deuteronomy 6:6
6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

7. The wicked spreadeth himself, then passeth away and cannot be found, Psalm 37:35, 36;

Job 5:3
3 I have seen the foolish taking root: but suddenly I cursed his habitation.

8. The end of the perfect and upright man is peace, Psalm 37:37-40;

1 Chronicles 5:20
20 And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them: for they cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them; because they put their trust in him.

Isaiah 32:17
17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

NOTES:

This is truly an outstanding Psalm. It is a Psalm of trust. It exhorts the righteous to have faith and confidence in God. It is a genuine encouragement to all who are righteous and is also
to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation.

15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

16 A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.

17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.

18 The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.

19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

20 But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.

21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.

22 For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.

23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.

24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

25 I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

26 He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.

27 Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.

28 For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

29 The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.

a potent warning to the unrighteous. It has been a source of comfort to countless multitudes of people who have followed God and who have therefore taken upon themselves the reproach of the Cross. It is especially valuable because it compares the present state of the godly and of the ungodly, as well as comparing their eternal reward or judgment.

In times like these in which we are now living, it is easy for even the righteous to worry or fret if they allow themselves to look at present conditions from a purely human standpoint. We need to view these distressing conditions by the eye of faith and with complete confidence in God and perfect trust in His sovereign power and care. If we really delight ourselves in the Lord we can take whatever He sends as from His hand. If it is a blessing, we can praise Him for it. If it is adversity, we can thank Him for that also, knowing it is for our good, and submit ourselves to a thorough examination to see if somewhere we have stepped aside from His will.

**Our Protection by God**

Resting in the Lord is abiding in the secret place of the Most High (Psalm 91:1-2 1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.). The Holy of Holies in the Temple was covered with a cloud of God's glory; and whoever entered those sacred precincts had the protection of God. Only the high priest was allowed to enter that Holy of Holies in those days, but in this Christian dispensation all believers may enter into the very holiest by the Blood of Jesus. Therefore, we are secure when the Blood has been applied to our hearts and we have been cleansed by that Blood from all sin. Those who have been thus covered by the Blood have the only absolutely safe retreat.

**The Last Days**

This Psalm fits closely into the picture of the last days. Here is described the wicked as they plot against the just and cast down the poor and needy, opposing all who are of an upright conversation. Here is a real picture of the evil forces working in the world today — the spirit of the Antichrist in the ungodly. But their time is short. The Lord will laugh at them, for He sees that their day of judgment is coming. God has said: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Revelation 12:12). But in His Word God has also said: "Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be."

These passages of Scripture show us that the enemy of human souls will seek to overthrow the righteous. That is the aim of the atheistic, anti-Christian power that is trying to rule today. They would like to put every Christian off the face of the earth and blot the name of God out of human remembrance.

This world is now in a critical period of its history. If man were left to his own devices the human race would soon perish. The powers of evil would take absolute control if they could. But there is a restraining power in the world. It is the Spirit of God who is working in Person and also through the Bride of Christ. Thank God for the few upright people who are opposing the forces and powers of evil! They will be sustained by a Power that is stronger than the enemy of men's souls. "The LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for
30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.
31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.
32 The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.
33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.
34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.
35 I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.
36 Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.
37 Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.
38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off.
39 But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble.
40 And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

The Wicked's Pride and Conceit

In our own time we have seen the wicked rise to power and spread themselves in arrogance and pride, speaking and sponsoring all forms of evil and immorality. We have also seen them cut down like the grass, and have seen them wither as the green herb. They have plotted against the just and gnashed on the righteous with their teeth, but their own sword has entered into their heart. Some of them have died by their own hands, in rebellion and obstinacy plunging their souls into eternity to face a just and omnipotent God.

Nebuchadnezzar, in his pride and conceit, was likened unto a tree whose height reached unto Heaven and the sight thereof to the end of the earth. He was warned, in a dream, of God's coming judgment, when he heard a watcher from Heaven cry: "Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit" (Daniel 4:14). The man of God, Daniel, exhorted Nebuchadnezzar: "Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor" (Daniel 4:27). But the exhortation went unheeded. Just when Nebuchadnezzar was glorying in the height of his majesty and power, there came a voice from Heaven, "The kingdom is departed from thee." The pride of Babylon withered "as the green herb."

Belshazzar knew of the judgment of God against his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, but he, too, failed, to take warning. One night while Belshazzar was reveling in sin, a hand wrote upon the wall of the banquet hall, "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it." "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain" (Daniel 5:26, 30). This is another example of the truth of the Word of God pronounced against the evildoers: "They shall soon be cut down."

Judgment

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Corinthians 5:10). The wicked may flourish for a time upon this earth, but what about that day when he must stand before the Judge on the Throne? What will it be when the righteous Judge looks down into that man's heart and sees sin? Many sins may be covered over now; but what good will that do in the day that "the wicked shall be turned into hell" (Psalm 9:17). "Fret not thyself because of evildoers"; for their judgment is coming and "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night" (Revelation 14:11). Many people today who are trifling with the mercy of God will someday wake up to the awful fact that they are doomed to spend eternity "in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). How terrible are the consequences of continuing in sin when God offers pardon and eternal life to those who will walk in His ways!

The Will of God

We are urged to wait on the Lord and keep His way. Some people wait on the Lord and then go their own way. The Scripture commands us to keep God's way always and to live in the spirit of obedience.

A Hebrew scholar has told us that to wait, in the original Hebrew, implies the extension of a straight line from one point ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off."
to another. He clarifies his metaphor by saying that the first point is the human heart; the straight line is the heart's desire; and the last point is God. We are sure that a line from the heart pointing straight to God, with an earnest desire to do God's whole will for Him, will keep a saint so that none of his steps will slide.

**Meekness, a Godly Attribute**

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us that the meek shall inherit the earth. Several times in this Psalm we are told the same thing. The spirit of meekness is not the spirit of the world. Meekness is contrary to the methods and attitudes adopted by the ungodly of this world. It is contrary to the spirit of the devil. Meekness is from God, and in it there are great strength, power, and influence.

Moses was a very meek man and yet he was a forceful and successful leader, admired by all Israel. David had the spirit of true meekness and yet he was Israel's great king and leader, looked up to and respected by millions of people. Elijah had a meek spirit, not taking to himself one opportunity for earthly advantage or fame; and yet he was able, through the Spirit of God, to bring a whole nation to God on one occasion and cause members of armies and civilian individuals to abandon their plans to do harm to the people of God. "The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."

Other requirements are also stated. We are to depart from evil and do good. We are not only to avoid evil, but we are to be ever on the lookout to help some other soul find the path of righteousness. That is the full meaning of doing good. Merely feeding the poor or relieving the suffering, all the while allowing them to go without spiritual help and spiritual food, is not doing the real good. Good deeds proceed from a good heart.

**Sustenance in Famine**

David's own experience had put confidence in his soul that God would take care of His saints in times of famine. David was an old man when he wrote this Psalm. In his younger days he had gone through many trials and some very extreme privations. He had roamed on the ragged mountaintops with the coney's and wild goats, and perhaps there were many times when he saw a scarcity of food. But as David looked back upon those days he could say, "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked."

Going through such hardships in his early life made David a rugged warrior for righteousness as well as a warrior for Israel. He was confident that if a man trusted in the Lord and did good the Lord would provide for him. His faith and confidence were so strong that he could make the bold statement: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." This is an everlasting principle and promise. God always — and in all ways — provides for His own as He sees best for them.

**Rules for Living**

David began this Psalm with the prohibitory decree: "Fret not thyself because of evildoers." The prosperity of the wicked is short and they will soon be cut off. He stated: "Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be."

We are given some rules of life and directions to prevent
harmful worry and undue concern. We are told to "trust in the LORD," which means we are not to rely on human help. He also wrote, "Delight thyself also in the LORD." This means we will be pleased with God's ways. Next we are admonished, "Commit thy way unto the LORD." Thus it is clearly stated that we must let the Lord work out His will and way in our lives. Finally, we are to "rest in the LORD," and wait patiently for Him. God's plan is unimpeachable! God's will is perfect! God's time is best!

There is a sharp contrast drawn between the glorious inheritance of the righteous and the tragic end of the wicked. The good, upright, righteous man will have the Lord for his strength in the time of trouble; but transgressors will be destroyed, and in the end the wicked will be cut off.

"Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."

**QUESTIONS**

1. What two classes of people are contrasted in this Psalm?
2. Why are we not to fret because of evildoers?
3. Describe the end of the righteous.
4. Describe the end of the wicked.
5. What is said of the meek?
6. On what condition are we promised to be fed?
   - What did David say he had never seen?