Introduction

Let’s play a game: “Bad News, Good News.” I’ll describe a situation and you tell me if it’s bad news or good news.

• You’re in a college calculus class. Your professor texts you, asking you to come to her office to go over, as she puts it, “every detail of last Thursday’s test.”

• You get a letter in the mail from the IRS. They are sending agents to your home to discuss “every detail of your tax returns—for the past six years.”

• Your doctor’s office phones. They need you to clear tomorrow’s calendar and come in for a consultation. The staff needs to make sure you understand “every detail of your diagnosis and the upcoming treatment regimen” your doctor has prescribed.

• This is the last one. The Bible says, “The L ORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives” (Psalm 37:23).

Getting to the Heart

Some of us are optimists; we may look forward to a conversation about last week’s calculus test with our professor as a chance to recruit her as a mentor. On the other hand, who knows what the focus of such a discussion might be! Discussing every detail of one’s tax returns with a federal agent doesn’t sound like much fun, does it? And the appointment with our doctor? If we’ve been really sick and are about to take steps toward a promising treatment, we might welcome a detailed discussion. Still, a treatment plan that takes all day to explain?! I’m not so sure that’s great news!

So what about that last one, Psalm 37:23? The Lord delights in every detail of our lives? If we leave out the word every, this verse might encourage us a lot more. Right? What if it read: “The Lord delights in the details of our lives.” That leaves us some wiggle room. That makes it possible for us to convince ourselves that he may overlook a detail or two:

• Last night’s senseless, ugly argument with our daughter, son, friend or spouse.

• The gossip we share way too often.

• The selfishness and self-centeredness which guides so many of our decisions.

• The impatience with which we care for a toddler or an aging parent.

But no. There’s no misreading the verse. That pesky every is there, plain for all to see. The Lord, the Creator of all that exists, knows all the details, cares about all the details—every last one of them. It would be bad news,
terrible news, the worst news of all . . . except for these details, the details of the plan by which our Lord has saved us:

Those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under his curse, for the Scriptures say, “Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the commands that are written in God’s Book of the Law.” So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.”

Galatians 3:10–11

Through faith, we are righteous. Through faith in Jesus, our Savior, we have life, a whole new life. Through faith, we are the godly, the blameless, holy ones the Bible describes. This is all God’s gift—in every detail! It’s free! But it’s not cheap. It costs us nothing; it cost God everything! Jesus died—died a very real death, a gory death in every detail—to make our new life, our righteousness before God possible!

That makes the truth of Psalm 37:23 totally and overwhelmingly good news!

The LORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives.

Psalm 37:23

As you walk through life day by day, step by step, you never walk alone. Jesus walks beside you. He is your faithful Friend, Defender, Savior. He guides your steps, delighting in each.

Your steps today or this week may take you into your professor’s office or into your doctor’s exam room. You may tiptoe into your daughter’s bedroom or your friend’s kitchen to apologize. You may even step into a detailed IRS audit. But wherever you go, you can walk in humility, confidence, and courage. Your Lord delights in you! You are forgiven, righteous, and dearly loved!

Taking It Home

As you leave here today, remember Jesus’ constant, faithful presence. To help you do that, each of you will receive (name the item you are distributing and, perhaps, hold up a sample of it). Let the sunshine of your Savior’s smile light your path as he guides you into words and deeds of love and service that will delight him—and you, too!