



Leader Guide
Sunday, March 10, 2019

The Lord Holds Your Hand

Sermon Text: Psalm 37

Study Texts: Psalm 37

Sermon Recap: The main idea of this week's sermon is this: The LORD will not forsake His people, but the wicked will be cut off. Take time before your growth group to review the key points you noted from this week's sermon.

Sermon Connection: We find in Psalm 37 a great and divine promise: God will not forsake us, His people. Upon such a sure foundation, the Lord thus commands His people to live boldly and with a hope undiminished and unending. It is important for us to consider each of these commands and the implications they hold for our lives, individually and collectively as the Church. As we consider these many commands, we do so with the great assurance that the LORD will not forsake His people.

Lesson Plan

Lesson Goal: To see the commands to live faithfully before the Lord rest upon His steadfast promise to never forsake His people.

Lesson Points: Obedient and faithful living before the Lord

The Context: The Psalms are a tremendous and beautiful portion of the Bible, and particularly of Hebrew poetry. While there are larger portions of Psalms to be taken together, most Psalms are individual; meant to be taken one complete. In Psalm 37, we find the Psalmist contrasting the godly and the wicked. The form is similar to Proverbs where wickedness is contrasted against the command for righteous living. Therefore, as we come to this text, we want to consider each command (imperative phrase) and how it calls us to righteous living before the Lord *on the basis of* God's goodness toward His people.

Opening Question: What would it take for you to be excited about fulfilling a command for obedience?

Transition Statement: The Bible is full of commands for obedience, and we should heartily desire to obey these commands because they are from God Himself, but also because they are life-giving.

Obedient and Faithful Living Before the Lord.

Fret not yourself because of evildoers (v. 1): To fret here means to get excited or to burn with hot anger. The Psalmist states it in the negative: "*Fret not yourself...*" means then, that we are not to get worked up or angry. And the Psalmist applies this to evildoers. We should not get worked up, angry, or vengeful over those who commit evil. But the command is rooted in the promise of God that the wicked will "*soon fade like grass.*"

Trust in the Lord, and do good (v. 3): The word "trust" here means to be confident or unsuspecting. The idea that the Lord is worthy of our confidence and that we should never suspect that God is doing something against our good, for such is against His Own character. Because God is entirely trustworthy and good, we can commit ourselves to faithful living and good works deposit the evil and wickedness of the world.

Dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness (v. 3): In Old Testament literature, the phrase "*the land,*" is significant in a number of ways, and here it signifies God's provision of comfort, care, and protection. Furthermore, the word translated "*befriend*" carries a shepherding tone meaning "to cultivate." Thus, to "*dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness*" means to "rest in God while cultivating holiness in your heart."

Delight yourself in the Lord (v. 4): To delight ourselves in God means that we are to find our enjoyment in Him, in His person. We are, here, invited to find our full love and appreciation of God in nothing other than His Person. He is the perfect Father we all long after. Simply being in His presence is a comfort, a delight, and a deep encouragement to our hearts.

Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him...(v. 5): The Psalmist here instructs us to commit our way to the Lord. The idea of "committing" means literally "to roll upon God." We might also think of 1 Peter 5:7 where we are instructed to "cast our burdens upon God, for He cares..." But this is no mere offloading of stress. We are committing to God is our entire way of life. To say it differently, we are choosing to live unto God and God alone.

Here, vv. 4-5 can be taken together. We trust Him because He is good. We trust Him because He is our delight. Therefore, even the act of choosing to trust Him—even when things seem dark—becomes an act of delight.

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him (v. 7a): Being still before the Lord is an expression of reverence, and being still to wait upon Him is an act of trust. God is Sovereign over all things. He controls all things and orders all things. Therefore, in our waiting before Him, we are reminded that God is working all things together for His glory and our good (Rm. 8:28). "To wait" means "to remain steady and patient," but it can also mean "delaying or putting a stop to our worrying." Thus, our trust in God should steadfastly guard us against sinful worry.

Fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way...Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil (vv. 7b-8): The Psalmist is addressing a normal human emotion. When we see evil people succeeding, it can cause us to fret or to burn with anger, to get worked up. But the anger is not ours to execute. Paul reminds us in Galatians 6 that God is not mocked by evildoers. There is coming a day when the Lord will repay all evil with His eternal righteous wrath. Knowing that God is still in control over and above the evil and wicked, we let our trust in His goodness keep us from fretting, which itself only causes sin in our hearts.

Shepherding Note: How can the righteous content themselves in waiting for the Lord when the evil and wicked seem to be succeeding (vv. 10-17)?

It is important to note that the Psalmist holds 2 things in tension here. First, he is helpfully honest about evil and wickedness in the world, not only that it exists, but also that it seems to have the upper hand at times. A second thing the Psalmist holds is the sovereign control of God over all things, including evil. Therefore, the Psalmist can trust in God's good control knowing that evil shall not prevail, and that God will have the final, decisive word.

Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked (v. 16): Here, the Psalmist emphasizes the value of godliness over worldly gain. While we are tempted to look to the world for hope and satisfaction, the Psalmist reminds us that it is far better to lose the world than to lose our soul to the world (Mt. 16:26).

The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in His way (v. 23): There is a great promise here for the godly, which is that God will establish him and lead him. But we must also note the Psalmist's insistence on godly living. He notes that God blesses and establishes those who delight in the way of God. The meaning is twofold: 1) We must recognize that no man delights in the way of God naturally. It is only by the grace of God through the gospel that any man is saved and comes to delight in the law of God (Ps. 1); and 2) Although our delighting in the law is not so that God will save us, we do seek to keep the Law (God's way) as a means of honoring and loving the God Who so graciously saved us.

Turn away from evil and do good (v. 27): Here, we have a command for holiness stated in both the negative and the positive: "Turn away from evil..." literally means to "depart from it,

to leave it behind and have nothing more to do with behavior and action.” As we leave evil behind, we embrace goodness, which is embracing God Himself. We should hear echoes of 1 John in this verse.

Wait for the Lord and keep His way (v. 34):

Waiting for the Lord is an act of faith. It does not mean that we are sitting around idly wondering and speculating when the Lord will come. On the contrary, the word “wait” in v. 34 carries with it the idea of expectant hope. It is also tied to the idea of a strong and robust hope. Therefore, as we wait for the Lord, we are expecting Him to come, expecting Him to fulfill all that He has promised, and we are doing so in a strong and robust way. To state it differently, as we wait, we keep His way. To wait upon God is to live a life of faith *Coram Deo* (before His face, in His presence).

The Big Picture - Walking in Faith because God is Faithful

As stated earlier, the main idea of this week’s sermon is: The LORD will not forsake His people, but the wicked will be cut off. This is a tremendous promise for the people of God. God will never leave, nor will He ever forsake us (Deut. 31:6; Mt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5). Therefore, because of God’s enduring presence with and His promises to His people, the Church can live with great faith while she waits upon the Lord.

The time for the Lord’s return has not yet come. But we know that He has promised that He is coming, and that He will not leave us. And because of these things, we are called, commanded, and empowered to live faithfully before His face day-by-day. Psalm 37 clearly and helpfully outlines the differences between God’s faithful and the wicked of the earth. As we have considered each of these commands in turn, we come away with a singular truth: We walk in faith because God is faithful.

Application Questions

- How am I walking in faith before the Lord?
- How am I leading my family to walk in faith before the Lord?
- How is my life different from the wicked of the world?
- How is our growth group walking in faith before the Lord?
- How can we call others to walk in faith before the Lord from this text?