



"Trust in the Lord and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart, Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He will do it, He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him..."
Psalm 37:3-7a (nasb)

I love how much there is to think about in these four verses, too much to cover at one sitting, so stick with me as we spend a whole week discussing this passage. And may the Lord bless our time as we study together.

Today, let's begin with verse 3 of Chapter 37 -

"Trust in the Lord and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness."

Seems simple enough, right? Trust in the Lord. Do good. Dwell in the land. Cultivate faithfulness. And then... life smacks us upside the head. And "trust" turns to doubt, worry, or fear. "Doing good" becomes doing what we think will be the best for ME in the moment, and we forget about doing what is best overall. Instead of "dwelling in the land" (or the situation as the case may be) we want to run, escape, and not have to face the problem engulfing us. Instead of working on "faithfulness" we become wishy-washy, and again, we shirk off faithfulness in lieu of expedience to rid ourselves of any discomfort or hardship.

What seems like such a simple verse become words that are hard to live when we're in the middle of financial woes, marital problems, kids run-amuck, jobs we dislike, family that causes grief, or maybe even true grief itself comes knocking.

But what would happen if we did do these things? What if we trusted in the Lord when life hits us with the unexpected? What if we did good regardless of what sacrifice it might take on our part? What if we just stopped running and faced life's heartaches, becoming faithful rather than flakes? How different would our world be?

Trusting the Lord only becomes easy when we remember WHO He is. *Trust means: Reliance upon. Put confidence in. Believe.* Our problems only become small when we know and believe how BIG our God is. Our lives only really change when we live in light of what He has done on our behalf and rely on what He will do with the now, and the future. Our faithfulness not only comes through determination, but determination to allow His working in our hearts and minds because we trust Him, rely on Him, put our confidence in Him.

Trust in the Lord and do good! What good can we do apart from the Lord God? Look what it says in 1 Corinthians 3:12-16 about doing good things, it says, ***"Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"***

These verses are talking about the difference between us allowing the Spirit to work through us, or us working in our own strength. The fire represents judgment, and there will come a day when He judges the works we have done. Will our works be seen as righteous (according to the specifications of His plan) or will they be burned up as wood, hay and stubble because we did them under our own authority and power?

Ladies, there are many GOOD things in this world, but not all are godly. There are many good choices, but if it's not His timing, or His leading, they are worthless, empty works, totally pointless. The goal is to live in perfect harmony with His will, empowered by His Spirit, for then, and only then, are our works worthy of reward. Apart from Him there is no good that we can do (John 15:5).

How's that for God's grace? He designed a plan for our lives, He provides the Savior and His Spirit to accomplish that plan, and then, He gives US the reward for accomplishing it? (Yep, I'm with those others who will choose to cast our crowns back at His feet, for He alone is worthy, what about you?)

His word says to " ***dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.***" *Dwell is to: live among, inhabit, abide, stay, remain, camp.*" Sometimes that is the last thing we'd like to do. We all have times when "flight" would be our choice, rather than standing our ground. But ladies, God calls us to "dwell in the land" and He can use any thing this world throws at us to help us cultivate faithfulness.

The phrase to cultivate actually has the idea to "*care for any needs that flocks of small mammals have, and so act as a herdsman, with a focus on providing grazing pasture for the flock and moving the flocks around to the grazing grounds.*"¹ Picture those problems, those frustrations as sheep (yep, sheep are pretty stupid.) We are responsible for tending, for providing the best fertile grounds to grow the faithfulness God desires from us with the "sheep" He has allowed in our pasture, stupid as they may be. Shepherding requires us to pay attention to the choices we make because much is at stake. We need to have a heart soft toward God's leading, and to cooperate with Him in the process of making us faithful. These are the choices we make every time we come up against something that we are having to "dwell" in. Will we trust? Will we camp in those situations in a way that will cultivate faithfulness within us?

Faithfulness - that is what our Lord is to us. He is always, completely, affirmingly, faithful to us, does He not deserve our faithfulness in return? Someday we will be called into account for the way we lived in this land, how we cultivated, how we dwelled. May we be as Jesus taught when He told the parable, saying, "***His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'***" (Matthew 25) No sweeter words could be said to us, right? Then walk with Him today. Trust in Him and do good. Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.

Father, at times this land in which we are having to dwell is hard. This is nothing new to You, for You see all and know all. And You even know how we can deal with it if we would just allow You to take us by the hand and lead us the right way. Help us to learn to cultivate a life of faithfulness, so that we will one day stand before You to hear the words, Well done, good and faithful servant. Praise You Father, Praise You Son, and Praise You Holy Spirit, for You remain gracious and faithful to us when we are instead petty and unfaithful. Forgive us for lacking in trust, and help us to know You more so that our reliance can be on You and You alone for every need. In Christ's name we come. Amen.