

Tune My Heart Part 2 (Psalm 37)

INTRO: In Genesis 3:15 the Lord says, *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”*

TEACH: These are God’s words to the serpent in the garden right after Adam sinned. It’s known as the first gospel. Though it seems like a riddle it’s a message about a promised seed, a deliverer, who would come and reverse the worldwide curse that came into the world through Adam’s sin. But it’s also the message of a worldwide, history length conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Between those who follow the serpent, that is the devil. And those who follow the offspring of the woman, that is the Redeemer. God’s promise in this verse, Genesis 3:15 is that there is hope for humanity in the redeemer. But He promises that there will be enmity throughout history. Though the offspring of the Righteous One will finish victorious b/c Jesus the Righteous One would indeed win this intense cosmic conflict by bruising the head of the serpent’s power on the cross. But History records the two sides of this conflict. All of humanity is either on the side of the righteous one. Or on the side of the wicked one. And this divide continues and will continue in history until Jesus Himself judges all mankind then divides the righteous and the wicked for their future eternity. The conflict between the righteous and the wicked is a conflict that splits humanity into two categories. Those who stand behind the offspring of the woman in faith or behind the offspring of the serpent in unbelief. We are either with the wicked or the righteous. Every day we are faced with decisions and fork in the roads that give us opportunities

to decide and side with one side or another. And today’s passage shows us this contrast in stark terms.

TRANS: This contrast between the righteous and wicked is what we see in today’s Psalm. We’re going to look at Psalm 37 today. This is week 2 in a series called, “Tune my heart”. This series was designed for us to tune our hearts in the simple gospel truths of the Psalms and savor God’s grace afresh. We want to have a heart to heart with the Lord and open up to Him since we may feel like we’ve drifted from Him. We may feel like we’ve drifted a great distance even. Last week we sought to find our voice in prayer, by learning from Psalm 90 where Moses the man of God was our prayer guide. (This week we look at another Psalm from another writer, this week it’s David). Today we come to a Psalm that is a wisdom Psalm. It isn’t so much us talking to God in prayer but us gleaning wisdom and perspective from God. At times you may feel that it’s reminiscent of the proverbs or Psalm 1 b/c it is indeed wisdom literature. But this psalm has something special for us b/c I think it’s going to help us understand how we believers are to walk by faith. Even if the things around us appear to be upside down and inside out. Especially when it comes to accurately assessing and making sense of the wicked people and wicked situations around us.

APP: My task today is to walk you through this text with the hope and grace of the gospel. But I’d also like to get personal at times b/c my job as a pastor is not to simply say things in general but to be specific to you, in this room. So it will be helpful as we start for you to identify the people or person in your life that is hurting, perhaps even seeking to harm you. Who is the evildoer in your life? For the kids here, when you see the word, “evildoer” or “wicked” in this text, think of the bully. The

person who keeps scheming against you. The villain. Your enemy. What's their name? For the spouse who is quietly enduring abuse of any kind...the evildoer in your life is the oppressor or abusive person, the madman or madwoman who is abusing their position or power to take something from you or exercise their control over you. As you start to think in these terms I hope you'll see that today's passage, though ancient, is a word in season for us to make sense of the wicked people around us. And if you are a bully or an abuser, you will also be addressed by the Lord today. You will be called out and warned in this passage as it shows us some universal truths that still apply to you today. God's Word will be directed to the righteous in order to give them perspective and peace of mind. But if you're living in unrepentant sin, you will be called to the mat today. God's Word will be calling you out and my encouragement to you would be to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Hear his word, put off the evil patterns of sin, and receive His words of life.

ILL: As I got thinking of this passage and the people who will hear it in this church I wondered what kind of evildoers each of you are contending with? It may be an evil neighbor, a wicked roommate or work colleague...but then I got thinking...well as a Christian, I know there are some patterns I expect to see in unbelievers. I expect that they will sin and sin against me. But I think some of the more baffling people and situations we contend with are the so-called Christian's who do evil against us. It's professing believer in my life that persists in evil that gives me pause. So I got thinking, maybe we should think more about the people who hurt us and do evil to us in our homes. Maybe it's not so much the thugs in the neighborhood who break into your car and

sell drugs outside your window. Maybe it's not a family member who lies, cheats and steals to get money for their drug addiction. Instead, maybe it's the Christian leader who acts like a gentleman in public but lives like a scoundrel and the rest of the time. I assume like me you tend to get angry at such injustices...CS Lewis said it well, "Of all bad men religious bad men are the worst." We fret and get upset as we consider the pain of the so-called Christian who ripped us off, lied to our face, did you dirty, slandered us and never owned up to it. What sometimes perplexes us as much as their wickedness is the fact that others around us and others who observe such behaviors refuse to call it evil. *This often compounds the hurt when they explain it away and tell you to simply forgive. We are definitely all about forgiveness here. But as you listen and care for people you need to have more tool in your tool box. It's not always a lack of forgiveness. Sometimes we need to make Scriptural sense of the evil we see. And we need to be free enough to call such evil, evil by name. I appreciate that today's passage is not afraid to call sin sin, to call evil evil and to show us how to think and respond in such situations.*

TRANS: Today's passage will show us how to walk by faith and not by sight when it comes to the evil we see around us. Walking by faith is a walk in reality that requires us to hear God's Words on the things that concern us. Faith cures fretting and getting frustrated at the wicked we see. And if you're feeling troubled at all about the evil in your community, home, school, church or family. Today's Word is a word for you. It's wisdom from above for your experience. In Psalm 37 we're going to see that:

God's words and actions give us a new view on the wicked who wrong us.

PRAY

1. **God's words and actions give us a new view...on our attitudes towards the wicked. (V.1-11) , Don't envy evildoers.)**

1 *"Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers!"*

TEACH: In these few verses we see a repeated command not to "fret" 3 x's. In v.1, v.7 & v.8. For context, the righteous person here is being spoken to and is given words of comfort and perspective as they observe what appears to be an injustice. The evildoers around them run around doing wicked things and they seem to be getting away with it! To fret is to worry, get heated or outraged at the injustices we see. In your life it may look like losing sleep at night. Worrying. Getting some extra grey hairs. I clearly need this message about fretting b/c ironically this series was born out of a sleepless night where I was fretting about what to preach to you in this series. :) We believers need to pay attention to what God says here. B/c fretting about the wicked things that the wicked people in our lives are doing, leads us into trouble too. In fact, if we don't hear this word, and we carry on in fretting, it can lead us into doing evil ourselves. Notice this in v.8. *"Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil."* It can also lead us to envy the wicked people around us (v.1). Keeping the heart tuned into God's grace is hard when people are sinning and doing evil against us. But It's a good time to tune our heart to the gospel, too.

APP: So believer, be aware and beware when they wrong you, you'll be tempted to return evil for evil. You may put your spiritual defenses and let the old man come out.

TRANS: As you look at this passage, you'll see many commands and promises to the righteous. And these are a source of comfort for them as they face the threats and attacks of the wicked. There are also promises of judgments against the wicked. And rewards and protection for the righteous. To summarize them you could say that the wicked will do wicked things but it will come to an abrupt end for them. They will be cut off. V.2 says, *"2 For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb."* And v.9-10 says, *"For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land. 10 In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there."* They are here and gone and nobody even sees what happened to them. They disappear under the judgment of God and die. Their name rots. In contrast to this plight, God's Word says that the righteous who humbly seek the Lord have an inheritance. *11 But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace."* We hear this again from the Lord Jesus in the sermon on the mount. There he says, *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."* The meek, or humble are those who have followed the commanded in the previous verses. Let's look at v.3-7 and listen to the commands and promises: *3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. 4 Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. 5 Commit your way to the LORD; TRUST in him, and he will act. 6 He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. 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! 8 Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath!

TEACH: Here are some remedies for fretting over the evil we see. Notice that they're to be carried out in faith or in v.3's language, by "*trusting in the Lord*". Taking one or two of these commands and promises into our hearts will give us the direction and wisdom we need when we're in the fog of war with evil. It helps us to not overcome by evil but to overcome evil with good. Notice also that anger and wrath are to be refrained from and forsaken. We need to beware that those responses to evil are natural and need a gospel powerful enough to forsake sinful anger. B/c seeing evil run rampant will make most of us angry.

TRANS: Also, did you notice what v.6 says? "*He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.*" Many things cause godly people to fret when people wrong them. But one of the things that bothers them is their reputation. Evil men and women tend to be ruthless when it comes to their words, slandering or gossiping about us behind our backs. And oftentimes the righteous are framed as evildoers by the true evildoers. So our reputations can at times get smeared and dishonored. So the man of God and woman of God is to walk by faith, focus on doing good and committing his way to the Lord trusting that God will act. And v.6 seems to be saying that God Himself will clear the slandered in the best way. He will bring out the truth of our righteousness and our justice. God will make our reputations shine in the bright light of noonday. We don't need to get hot and bothered about setting the story straight all the time to

everyone. We have the responsibility to do good. And to trust the Righteous Judge who is actively and intimately involved in our lives. As we'll see, He does and will act, our fretting and trying to correct all the wicked words and falsehoods will make us fret and faint. We have the responsibility as God's people to do good, trust God and watch how He acts. One of the reasons I chose this Psalm is because of v.4. It is a favourite to many of us. "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart" its one of the first verses I ever memorized. And the meaning is simple yet profound. It means that as you are living for the Lord, God will be working in your heart so that you actually desire to delight in Him. And as you delight in Him the things you desire in your heart will be renewed. So He is pleased to give you the good desires that you have.

APP: How many of you are troubled by what you see happening around you? Maybe it's the people who do immoral things, or illegal things or violent things? Maybe it's the misuse of power and the pervasive corruption in certain sectors of society? Maybe you've seen some injustice and misuse of power in Christian organizations or churches. And you tend to fret, you get upset and heated about these things...*But be careful, b/c as it says here, fretting about evil can lead you into evil.* So remember God's Word here. With the fire and heat in your heart. Entrust yourself to Him who judges justly. Delight yourself in Him. Sing of His justice and power. Make sure to seek the Lord for justice. And make sure to do good with your time and energy. **TRANS:** As we continue in this passage we see how our almighty God is active and involved in the lives of His people. In v.12-20 we see that:

2. God's words and actions give us a new view...on God's involvement against the wicked. (v.12-20)

12 The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him, (The wicked are gloating) 13 but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming. 14 The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose way is upright; 15 their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

ILL: V.14-15 reminds me of some verses I stumbled upon years ago when I was going through a terrible trial with powerful evildoers. I felt like I was doomed b/c they were bigger, more in number and more powerful than me. I was poor and needy and they were wronging me, they were coming for me and they were seeking to damage me and my reputation. As I'd share my problems with a few wise and loving people, many were unhelpful and naive. Giving the benefit of the doubt and always trying to explain away the evil that I was experiencing. But the best and wisest counselors would tell me things that shocked me. They'd remind me that there would be an end time judgment where Jesus exposes the truth to all. But they'd also remind me of the judgments they will face in real time, here and now. My wife and my mother in law were my most helpful counselors. And they would remind me of the gospel. And they would remind me of Haman. A story I wasn't too familiar with. They'd say, "Do what's right. Don't return evil for evil. God will defend you. Haman, prepared to hang and kill Mordecai yet the very gallows he prepared in wickedness were the cause of his own death." And in my case, the abusers that were trying to manipulate and scheme were overthrown by God's plan. Yes, God Almighty who acts

for the poor and needy, acted for me too! Though you cannot see our hidden help, believers are not alone or without help and power in such places. He gives grace to the humble and resists the proud. And maybe you can testify to this too. Maybe your enemies were planning to do you wrong. Yet the weapons they sharpened for you, the nooses they are setting up to own bring about their own fall. God has no problem overthrowing the wicked. Whether their weapons are lies, undermining truth, misuse or abuse of you. Whether it's spiritual, emotional, physical or relational - God sees, God knows and God will indeed act. Wait for the Lord.

TRANS: The problems that come for the wicked overwhelm them. And in a beautiful way and the presence and involvement of God overwhelms the righteous too. Look at v.16-17: *"Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked. 17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous. 18 The LORD knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will remain forever; 19 they are not put to shame in evil times; in the days of famine they have abundance. 20 But the wicked will perish; the enemies of the LORD are like the glory of the pastures; they vanish—like smoke they vanish away."*

TEACH: The enemies of the righteous are identified as the enemies of the Lord. And they quickly vanish, like smoke. Evildoers will reap what they sow. So will the righteous. Does this cheer your soul? To know that God is actively working in and for the righteous, even evildoers are plotting and scheming. They will fall on their own sword. God actively works and is intimately involved in the lives of the righteous. Does this cheer your heart believer? And what about those of you who don't

believe? Maybe you're actively wronging and pursuing to hurt someone. Do you feel the pressure and conviction of God for your evil? This passage says, "the wicked will perish". Do you see your problem yet? Do you see your need for Jesus, now?

TRANS: Let's continue to gain wisdom and get clear sight to make sense of the wicked in our lives.

3. God's words and actions give us a new view...on our activities while we wait for God to act against the wicked. (v.21-36)

21 The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives; 22 for those blessed by the LORD shall inherit the land, but those cursed by him shall be cut off. 23 The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way; 24 though he falls, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand. 25 I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. 26 He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing. 27 Turn away from evil and do good; so shall you dwell forever. 28 For the LORD loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off. 29 The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell upon it forever. 30 The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice. 31 The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip. 32 The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death. 33 The LORD will not abandon him to his power or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial.

TEACH: Here we may see some themes repeated. The righteous must maintain a posture of humble trust in the timing and trustworthiness of God. But also, they must maintain a certain posture towards the evil in

their hearts too. V.27 reminds me of the example of Lot's wife. We aren't supposed to look back at our life of sin. We aren't to go back to the sins that used to have our number. Rather we're to turn away from evil and do good. Keep your eyes on the promises of God. On the person of Jesus. And remember that though it may not appear this way at the moment, the wicked are on shaky ground. Their present and future are unstable. Yet, the righteous will inherit the land. Which reminds us of God's promises made and promises kept for his people. But as NT Christians, living ages after David we know that those of us who follow Jesus are co-heirs with Christ. Do you remember what Romans 8:16-17 says of you believer, "*The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*"

APP: My Christian sister or brother, let me apply some more verses to your heart now. If you are facing an evildoer right now. v.28, says "*The LORD loves justice, He will not forsake his saints.*" That's your verse, believer. Personalize it. Write it down. God is not unjust. He will not forsake you. He will see to it that the evildoer in your life doesn't get away with this. He won't get away from the final judgement. But as this passage shows us. Even in this life they will reap what they sow. They will experience the resistance of God working against them, for their evil. V.33 is for you too, it says, "*The LORD will not abandon him to his power (that is the wicked's power) or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial.*" If your enemy is rich and powerful. Maybe even intimidatingly so, understand, He's a little creature compared to God. God won't throw you under his power and abandon you. He'll be

working. So you're best course of action is: *34 Wait for the LORD and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off. 35 I have seen a wicked, ruthless man, spreading himself like a green laurel tree. 36 But he passed away, and behold, he was no more; though I sought him, he could not be found.*

TRANS: While the wicked ruthless people who seek to harm us strut their stuff, one day they pass away. Their madness comes to an end. It cannot be denied that God works for the faithful. He does not forsake or abandon us, even if we are being pursued and abused. He will act! We will experience God working for us.

TRANS: Let's see how this passage finishes. It ends with a flourish for the faithful.

4. God's words and actions give us a new view...on God's salvation of the righteous from the hands of the wicked (v.37-40).

37 Mark the blameless and behold the upright, for there is a future for the man of peace. 38 But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed; the future of the wicked shall be cut off. 39 The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble. 40 The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him."

TEACH: We need not fret or worry too long about the wicked. If we would keep our eyes on anyone it should be the blameless and upright. The believer. If you wanna see something beautiful, redemptive, hopeful, watch how the Lord delivers them! They have a good future. They are going somewhere. The villain is a flash in the pan. But the believer becomes more like the Lord who saves them. And as they trust in him, take refuge in him He is worth watching b/c the Lord saves Him.

He is the stronghold in their times of trouble. And though it may be painful to look at it is a beautiful sight to see a saint trusting in their God while they suffer evil. B/c the Lord is the one who helps and delivers them from the wicked.

We saw this most clearly in the life of Jesus didn't we? He showed us that it suffering at the hands of evildoers comes with the territory. If you're going to live for righteousness you're going to be hurt by evildoers. But don't break faith, believer. God is still working in you and for you while they try to attack you. 1 Peter 2:21-23: *"For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."*

APP: The Gospel is a message that tells us evildoers will not ultimately and forever get away with it. They will face judgment. Though at the moment it appears they are doing just fine, looks can be deceiving. They are about to fall and face judgment. The good life without regret, is trusting in the Lord. The Word of His promise in His Son. Who faced death, died for all the evil you've done, rose again and is alive and well today. He will return one day to set every wrong and wrongdoer right. But today, the word for you to hear is this. Run to Jesus. Take salvation from Him. Salvation for the righteous is from the Lord. Even if you've lived a wicked life, all your life, you can be righteous today if you come to Him. And let me have a final word with you if you're here and you know that you're the evildoer. You are actively doing evil against righteous people. Do you realize your judgment is sure and soon? My

word to you comes from Acts 17:30-31. *“The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”*

CONCL: Jesus is the risen Lord. He died sinners. Evildoers. Wicked people. Ungodly people. Is that you? Run for cover in Jesus today. Repent before you're swept away forever. He will take you in today, if you come on His terms. And He says, “Repent and believe the Gospel”. Have you?