

Psalm 37

Introduction – Sometimes prayer is not so much talking with God but listening to God. Psalm 37 is a prayer of listening. This psalm speaks of God and of His world and in this psalm God speaks His “Proverbs-like” wisdom to us. Particularly, the topic of this psalm is one of admonition, warning and encouragement to remember what God has promised in His great story, a story in which we find ourselves often tempted, because evil and wickedness are prospering, to think that they will succeed in the end. Hear God speak; listen to the Psalm-singer sing His Psalm to us.

The Spirit of Meekness (vv1-11) – This section describes the character and reward of the meek, ending in v11, *“the meek shall inherit the earth”* which Jesus quotes as the third Beatitude (Matt 5:5). And so here we have a situation where the OT fills in for us what Jesus means in the NT. Both the OT and Jesus tell us that *“the meek shall inherit the earth”* and not *“the meek shall inherit heaven,”* in fact this psalm makes this clear over and over again (v9, 11, 22, 29). Do not think that the Christian faith is only inward and upward. The Bible teaches that the kingdom of God is also downward and outward upon the earth and that nations will come and worship our God.

But it often does not look like that and so the faithful are told to be meek. What does this meekness look like? Meekness remembers the storyline and does not see a static snapshot (vv1-2). The meek are not passive; they trust the LORD and *do good* (v3). They delight themselves in the LORD and in His promises and find their desires are all met in Him (v4); this is not outlandish because this meekness/delight reorients your desires. The meek “roll” their burdens upon the LORD, trusting for His vindication (vv5-6, 1 Pet 5:6-7). The meek do not fret over the wicked nor are angry with the LORD over His delays (vv7-8). The meek hear the Psalm-singer telling them to wait, remembering the story and that there will be a day when you will not be able to find the wicked anywhere (vv9-11). What we learn is that meekness is not weakness; meekness (humility) before God is strength before men. The wicked do not cause us to falter in our faith because meekness remembers the story. Consider the meekness of Moses (Num 12:1-4) and Jesus (Matt 11:28-30). Meekness (sometimes translated “gentleness”) is not something we muster up; meekness is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22f).

The Hidden Help of the Lord (vv12-26) – In this section we hear how the righteous (meek) continue to trust and then receive the hidden help of the Lord. The wicked plot against the righteous, but the Lord laughs at them and their silly plots (vv12-13, Psalm 2:1-6); this teaches us how to respond when we see the wicked building instruments of harm upon the weak while we do good. They draw their weapons, but the same shall be turned against them (vv14-15). With great confidence, the righteous knows his little is far more blessed than the wicked’s cursed riches (vv16-17). Because of this, the meek will survive tough days while the wicked will eventually perish (vv18-20). The wicked, perpetual takers, will be replaced and overcome by the righteous, constant givers (vv21-24, Luke 19:26); even their descendants are well cared for (vv25-26). Of course David would know that this does not mean that there will not be difficulties in this life; he knew such firsthand. However, you hear the same kind of thing from Paul, that he was *“persecuted, yet not forsaken...”* (2 Cor 4:7-18). The psalm calls us to take the long view.

Taking the Long View (vv27-40) – With this Spirit-wrought assurance, the righteous can avoid the temptation to join with the evil and, remembering where the story is going, do good (vv27-29). Confident truth, wisdom, and promise come out of the righteous and the wicked cannot trip him up (vv30-33). “Wait on the LORD,” the Psalm-singer cries in His finale, even when the wicked are prospering, for they will fade – so far away that they will not ever be remembered or found (vv34-36). “Mark the righteous man,” He sings, and we should see that the Father is singing of His Son, Who is the Prince of Peace, Who will cut off the wicked, who will deliver His righteous ones, *“...and save them, because they trust in Him”* (vv37-40).

A Good Story-Teller – Imagine going to see a movie written by one of your favorite screenwriters or directors, one that you trust is an incredible story-teller. Imagine being in the middle of the movie, so well-told, that it appears that the protagonist cannot win and that evil will prevail. You are tense, on the edge of your seat – and yet there is a confidence down deep that you know how it will end and a confidence that the story is not yet done. This Psalm is there for us in the middle of the story, in the middle of that tension, in the apparent uncertainty of how it will all pan out. This is the Father whispering to the child, “no, don’t run away. Watch. You will see, it will all work out.” This is the Psalm-singer singing to you, reminding you, *“Do not fret... Trust in the LORD... Delight yourself also in the LORD... Commit your way to the LORD... Rest in the LORD... Cease from anger... Depart from evil, and do good... Wait on the LORD... Mark the blameless man...”* Why? How does He know? *“...they shall inherit the earth... the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace... for those blessed by Him shall inherit the earth... the righteous shall inherit the land and dwell in it forever... He shall deliver them from the wicked and save them...”* Listen. He is singing to you.