

Decisions! Decisions!

(The Greatness of Godliness, part 1)

Psalm 37:1-11

I want to begin a series of messages out of this incredible psalm penned by a man that surely has been where he wrote. Most scholars believe that David penned this psalm when he was in his old age – and I would agree with them. Here was a man that had seen more than his share of pain and suffering amongst the good people in the world – but he had also witnessed God making things right. Did he see it happen in every situation? No. But he knew that whether here or in the air, God would make it right.

All throughout this psalm we will see where David compares the godly to the godless. And his words of challenge, admonition and encouragement to the godly are to stay the course regardless of your feelings. In these first verses, I want to look at them through the lens of tonight's title, "Decisions! Decisions!" How many of you have decisions you need to make? Everyone one of us have decisions we need to make, and David lays out four areas in which we need to decide how we will be and do and act. One area, the last one, is of particular interest. Notice what he says.

Read Psalm 37:1-11

I want to show you four decisions:

1. Decide about attitude vv 1-2

A. *That life is not fair is a fact.* Bad things will happen to good people and good things will happen to bad people. But where we mess up when it comes to attitude is that we think the outcome happens earlier than it actually does. David reminds his readers of a universal fact that the consequences of the actions of the evil people will eventually catch up with them – but it's usually not on our time schedule. But let's dig a little deeper here.

B. *We must decide whether or not we will be fretful.* David makes it very clear here, "Do not fret...." David used that word three times in the verses we read. What does that mean? What does that look like? Fret means according to the Strong's Lexicon, "to heat oneself in vexation." We don't use the word vexation much these days. It means to work ourselves into a tizzy thinking about something. Maybe this example will help. Something happens – at work, at home, at church – and we "lie in bed at night and rehearse the whole outrageous episode. First we think of all they said and did, then we go over how we answered them, then we wish we had thought of some other choice [comments] to hurl at them! Soon our digestive juices have turned to sulfuric acid and we lie and toss and turn, wondering when sleep will ever come! Our fretting is hurting no one but ourselves and accomplishes nothing."¹

For the sake of embarrassment for everyone, I will not ask for a show of hands if you can relate! But we've been there! But here's our thought process. We have in our minds that good things will happen to good people and bad things will happen to bad people. And even in the Old Testament, "God promised believers *earthly* and *material* prosperity. He has not promised that to believers today. Our hope is in heaven, not on earth. But the hope of Israel was upon the earth. The man of that day looked about and saw the ungodly prosper. He could see the fields of the ungodly being watered by the rain and flourishing, while down the road a poor righteous man was having a hard time. It was difficult to understand the reason for this."² But here's what we have to ask and what David brings up right out of the shoot. "Where are these men today? Just give God time. He will deal with the wicked. It is the *end* of the ungodly that we need to consider. If it disturbs you

when you look around today and see the wicked prospering, there are several things you can do to solve your problem."³ And David will outline those throughout the rest of this psalm.

But we've got to decide what kind of attitude we are going to have. Will it be one of fretfulness and envy because we've allowed evildoers to determine our attitude? Or will our attitude be decided by our unchanging and just and gracious God? A couple of other points to remember about the unrighteous. One is a statement and the other is a verse. "We must not be **envious** of the unrighteous! This earth is the only heaven they're ever going to have."⁴ One of Job's "friends" made a true statement in conversing with Job. Zopher noted, "the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment" (Job 20:5). Why should the righteous be envious of that?⁵

"Well, preacher, am I just supposed to accept and not be bothered by what's going on in Washington, or by some wrong things taking place at my work, or by some hurtful actions or words from someone?" Go back to my example of what fretting looks like. The most important action we will ever do and it will affect our attitude almost immediately is to go before our Lord with the issue and stay before Him until He has calmed our spirit and will protect us from whatever the fallout may be.

What's your attitude like? Others may say that you are having a hard time about having the right attitude with someone that is supposedly NOT an evildoer – a brother or sister in Christ. I believe the same admonition applies. You make sure your attitude is right before God knowing that in the end He will make the situation right as well.

But I want you to see another decision,

2. Decide about Actions vv 3-4

A. *David lists five actions that are important for us to do:*

1. **Trust.** This command here is for his readers (and us) "to have confidence, be confident, to be bold, and secure."⁶ "This trust does not mean an unfounded, breezy optimism that everything will turn out right. Instead, it means a deep, abiding reliance on the God who has promised to punish the ungodly and to reward the righteous. His Word can never fail."⁷ What/Who is the source of our trust? Notice that our trust is in the greatest source possible – our Lord!

When you trust in the Lord, the next will follow,

2. **Do.** "What does "do" mean, preacher?" Do. Beloved, do good. When you trust in the Lord, there will be that desire that comes from Him to want to do good instead of just return evil for evil.

3. **Dwell.** This word means "to settle down to abide, to reside."⁸ Do you know what I think we do most of the time when it comes to this command. We don't dwell; we exist. To dwell, to abide, means to interact with your surroundings; to take advantage of the things where you have been placed. My question is if we are dwelling in that land known as the presence of the Lord – or are we just existing there? There is so much to be taken in and enjoyed in our Lord's presence – and so many times we never get involved or excited about what is really taking place in His presence – usually because it may not meet our preference. David said in another psalm that he longed to dwell in the presence of the Lord. Can you say that? One commentator said, "The upright will indeed **dwell in the land** and enjoy security. Despite the fiercest attacks of demons or men, no sheep of Christ will ever perish

³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*, electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 2:738

⁴MacDonald, William ; Farstad, Arthur: *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995, S. Ps 37:1

⁵*KJV Bible Commentary*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1994, S. 1026

⁶Strong, James: *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order*. electronic ed. Ontario : Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996, S. H982

⁷MacDonald, William ; Farstad, Arthur: *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995, S. Ps 37:3

⁸Strong, James: *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order*. electronic ed. Ontario : Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996, S. H7931

¹MacDonald, William ; Farstad, Arthur: *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995, S. Ps 37:1

²McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*, electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 2:738

(John 10:27–29). A dwelling place in the Father’s house is guaranteed to all who trust Christ (John 14:1–6).”⁹

We are to also,

4. **Feed.** Specifically David commands that we are to feed on His faithfulness. Is there any better diet for a believer than to feed on the faithfulness of our Lord? I’m telling you that is better, way better than Krispy Kreme doughnuts in the morning, Chick-fil-A at lunch, and the Cheesecake Factory for dinner with vanilla bean cheesecake for dessert! “David knew what he was talking about. For years he had lived as a hunted fugitive, yet he had not missed a meal and now Saul his enemy was dead and he himself sat upon his enemy’s throne. He indeed had his dwelling in the land.”¹⁰

And the final command in this brief section is,

5. **Delight** v 4. I love this verse. Just speaking honestly; as we go through times of trials – trusting, doing, dwelling, and feeding – all of these may become a bit of a challenge. But David reminds us that we are to delight ourselves in the very same Lord that we trust in, do for, whose presence we dwell in, and in whose faithfulness we feed. To delight means to “take exquisite delight, to make merry over.”¹¹

“This is good to remember, for when things go wrong we tend to get occupied with the problem. As long as we look at the problem, we shall become increasingly depressed, but if we look at the Lord we shall rise above our circumstances. After all, He hasn’t failed. He cannot fail. Our happiness must not rest upon what happens. It must be drawn out of the wellsprings of salvation and from our experiential knowledge of the goodness, grace, and greatness of our God.”¹² I love this statement that I found, “Evildoers delight in their position; but as a child of God, if you delight in yours, you will never envy theirs.”¹³ What a precious promise that our Lord gives us the desires of our heart! Why can David say that with great assurance? It’s because our delight is a direct reflection of the desire of our heart. Do you want to know what your heart desires? Just look at what or who you delight in.

B. When you look at your actions over the past weeks, do they give evidence that you are walking with the Lord and depending upon Him and delighting in Him?

We’re told of another area where we must decide,

3. **Decide about Approach vv 5-7**

A. I see three areas that David brings up in these verses: how you approach your,

1. **Route in life.** He says, “Commit your way to the Lord...” The word, commit, literally means to roll off onto. I’m grateful for dreams that we had growing up, because they often spurred us on to do things that we may not have normally done. David says here that we need to commit our way, our future, our hopes and dreams to Him. There are a bunch of people in our church and communities that need work. You’re out of a job with no idea or possibility of anything coming. Commit your way to the Lord. He knows and He is at work, really. For some, it may be that your way is about to consist of a major career change. My question to you is simple: what does God want you to do? Roll off these thoughts about the upcoming days of your life onto Him! He really does care and He really will see you through. But, you must trust in Him. In His time, in His way, He will bring it to pass.

We also need to decide how we will approach life when it comes to our,

2. **Reputation.** David states in verse 6 that He will bring forth our righteousness as the light and our justice as the noonday. This is encouraging to me. “You have been misquoted, falsely accused or slandered. If there were some shred of truth to the charges they wouldn’t be so hard to take. But they are absolutely untrue and malicious. What should you do? **Commit** the entire matter **to the LORD**. Roll the whole weight of it onto Him. Let Him act on your behalf, and then you will be completely vindicated. It will become clear for all to see that you were innocent after all.”¹⁴ Take a stand on something, and I can tell you that you may very well be misquoted. With the alcohol issue I heard from two different people that I said I forbade people from eating at a place and if they did I was going to kick them out of church. I never said that. I heard from someone else that I make everyone bring in their W-2’s before they can join. If they weren’t so sad, it would be funny. But the encouragement is this – in time, the record will be set straight. And David brings that out in another area,

3. **Retribution.** “Rest in the Lord...” Does that mean that we become a bunch of passivists and never speak up for the Lord? Well, I’m sure there were some that wished many would have been quiet on the alcohol issue. And there are others that wish many would be quiet on the homosexual issue or the abortion issue or the pornography issue or the evolution issue, etc. That’s not what David is saying. David is admonishing his readers to not get ahead of the Lord and do something apart from Him. When God calls you to go, to do, to speak up – do it! “Our best resource, however, is in God, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual and they are mighty through God for the pulling down of strongholds. Sometimes it takes greater discipline to wait than it does to war.”¹⁵

B. When it comes to your approach, could you say that God would be pleased with what you’re doing? I came across a poem that says it well,

“It is God’s will that I should cast on Him my care each day.

He also bids me not to cast my confidence away.

But oh, I am so foolish that when taken unawares,

*I cast away my confidence and carry all my cares. (T. Baird)*¹⁶

We need to decide about one more area,

4. **Decide about Anger vv 8-11**

A. Anger hurts us more than it hurts anyone else. Remember that it is David writing this. And boy were there a bunch of times in his life when he was angry or had the chance to be angry. Think about the times that Saul chased him. Think about the time when his wives and children and the families of his army were kidnapped. Think about the times when the kingdom didn’t operate just right. And I’m sure there were times when his anger was anything but righteous and he wanted to take out a vengeful wrath on those around him. But now, years later, and many experiences later, he states that we need to cease from anger – don’t lose your temper. Forsake wrath – put it out of your thoughts because it will lead you to some destructive and very regrettable ends. And for the third time, don’t fret. All of these things cause harm.

B. Angry people quickly forget that the final judgment will right every wrong. In these final verses I read, David reminds these people that are going through some trying times that they do not need to forget that the final judgment hasn’t come. “Evildoers will be cut off.... The wicked will be no more... [his place] will be no more.” Payday is coming and it’s not going to be pretty.

⁹MacDonald, William ; Farstad, Arthur: *Believer’s Bible Commentary* : Old and New Testaments. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995, S. Ps 37:3

¹⁰ John Phillips, *Exploring the Psalms*, 280.

¹¹Strong, James: *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order. electronic ed. Ontario : Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996, S. H6026

¹² John Phillips, *Exploring the Psalms*, 280.

¹³ KJV Bible Commentary. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1994, S. 1027

¹⁴MacDonald, William ; Farstad, Arthur: *Believer’s Bible Commentary* : Old and New Testaments. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995, S. Ps 37:5

¹⁵ John Phillips, *Exploring the Psalms*, 281.

¹⁶MacDonald, William ; Farstad, Arthur: *Believer’s Bible Commentary* : Old and New Testaments. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995, S. Ps 37:7

But the contrast is a great comfort. “Those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.... But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in an abundance of peace.” The Lord Jesus pulled from this psalm as He talked about the beatitudes. “The meek may never enjoy an abundance, but why should they care? An abundance of peace is theirs, and that is far better.”¹⁷

Proverbs 23:17-18 states, “Do not let your heart envy sinners, but *be zealous* for the fear of the LORD all the day; for surely there is a hereafter, and your hope will not be cut off.”

Can I ask you a question tonight? Are you angry? “No, I’m not angry, preacher. Just because I hope they (and you fill in the blank), doesn’t mean I’m angry.” Yeah, right. It’s a natural bent to want vengeance. But the supernatural presence of God in your life is willing to give the final judgment over to the Lord as well as any correction that may go with it. Anger is a horrible prison. So, I ask again – are you angry?

¹⁷ *KJV Bible Commentary*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1994, S. 1027