

The Lord Saves

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[0 : 00] I'm going to read Psalm 37. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, thank you that you give us your life-giving word. And as we hear your word this morning, we pray, Father, you give us ears that are open to hear and hearts ready to receive your teaching.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Psalm 37. Of David, fret not yourself because of evildoers. Be not envious of wrongdoers, for they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in him and he will act. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your justice as the noonday.

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.

[1 : 12] Refrain from anger and forsake wrath. Fret not yourself. Fret not yourself. It tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off. But those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.

In just a little while, the wicked will be no more. They look carefully at his place. He'll not be there. But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace.

The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him. But the Lord laughs at the wicked for he sees that his day is coming. The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy to slay those whose way is upright.

Their sword shall enter their own heart and their bows shall be broken. Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked.

For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous. The Lord knows the days of the blameless and their heritage will remain forever.

[2 : 24] They are not put to shame in evil times. In the days of famine they have abundance. But the wicked will perish. The enemies of the Lord are like the glory of the pastures.

They vanish. Like smoke they vanish away. The wicked borrows but does not pay back. But the righteous is generous and gives.

For those blessed by the Lord shall inherit the land. But those cursed by him shall be cut off. The steps of a man are established by the Lord when he delights in his way.

Though he fall he shall not be cast headlong. For the Lord upholds his hand. I have been young and now I am old. Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.

He is ever lending generously and his children become a blessing. Turn away from evil and do good. So shall you dwell forever. For the Lord loves justice.

[3 : 30] He will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever. But the children of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell upon it forever.

The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom and his tongue speaks justice. The law of his God is in his heart. His steps do not slip.

The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death. The Lord will not abandon him to his power or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial. 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. I have seen a wicked ruthless man spreading himself like a green laurel tree. But he passed away and behold he was no more.

Though I sought him he could not be found. Mark the blameless and behold the upright. For there is a future for the man of peace. But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed.

[4 : 43] The future of the wicked shall be cut off. The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord. He is their stronghold in the time of trouble.

The Lord helps them and delivers them. He delivers them from the wicked and saves them. Because they take refuge in him. Now I don't know if you've ever felt this way. I know I have. Sometimes you can feel that being a follower of Jesus is actually limiting my joy. If I wasn't a Christian, life would be much easier. In fact, if I wasn't a Christian, life would be actually much better. Have you ever felt like that? If that's how you're feeling right now, then this psalm is for you. And even if it's not how you're feeling right now, more than likely one day you probably will. When your non-Christian friend retires with a property portfolio, the massive super accumulation that begins their years of travel and is seeing as much of the world as humanly possible and you just can't keep up with them because you've invested in completely different things. [5 : 58] How will you feel? I know I could be tempted to be envious, possibly resentful. Maybe even think that God wasn't good to me.

And so this psalm is a psalm that I need to hear and we all need to hear, I know. But before we get too far into it, we need to consider who the wicked and who the righteous are. Did you hear that? The contrast between the wicked and the righteous all through the second half of the psalm. If I asked you to define a wicked person, who would you place in that category? The monsters of history, the Hitlers, responsible for the genocide of six million Jews. The Stalins, responsible for probably up to 20 million people. Or maybe the drug dealers ruining lives every day, counting the cash. But I wonder if you'd include the ordinary, everyday, law-keeping, middle-class Australian in that category of wicked person. [7 : 08] I mean, as we approach this psalm, and many like it, we need to be very, very clear on our categories. Right?

Because we can easily get things wrong when it comes to what the Bible says about who the wicked are and who the righteous are. Sometimes we define righteousness and wickedness like this.

There are wicked people. Right? They are the wrongdoers, the evil people, those who without doubt are looked down and despised by most people in the world. So when we see the villain in the movie, we clap and rejoice when he comes up and comes.

And then there's a group of people who are the particularly good people, those who are loving and kind and smiling and generous and exemplary citizens, giving to charity, upholding the law and patient on the road even.

You know, they're the good ones. And then there's a group of people who are not perfect, but nonetheless, we wouldn't describe them as wicked. No, no. They are just occasionally doing bad things, make mistakes.

[8 : 14] They're not perfect, but they're basically good at heart, we would say. They're basically okay. Here's a bit of a way we see things, a bit of a spectrum, right? The righteous, the green ones.

And then there's the wicked, the despised ones. And then there's the ordinary sort of okay ones in the middle, you know, they're alright, they're not that bad really. And we're taught from an early age that goodness and badness is on this spectrum.

Scripture does not go anywhere near this idea. The Scriptures have only two categories of people. The Scriptures teach us that righteousness and wickedness are binary categories.

You are either one or you are the other, right? You're either righteous or you're wicked. As Bob Dylan, the famous fantastic singer and poet and scholar would say, there ain't no neutral ground.

[9 : 24] The Scriptures make it clear that righteousness and wickedness are not defined by works. Righteousness and wickedness are defined by recognition that the Lord God is God.

The righteous person is someone who submits to Jesus as Lord and trusts in the promises of God. That was how Abraham was declared righteous way back in Genesis chapter 15.

Let me read it out to you. It's on the screen, hopefully behind you. Genesis chapter 15. Abraham said, Behold, you give me no offspring and a member of my household be my heir. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him. This man shall not be your heir.

Your very own son shall be your heir. And he brought him outside and said, look up to heaven. Number the stars, if you're able to number them.

And then he said to him, so shall your offspring be. And Abraham believed the Lord and he counted him, credited him, declared him righteous.

[10:28] Okay with God. Because he trusted. And then that's the Old Testament, right? Then Paul picks it up in Romans chapter 4 to say exactly the same thing, talking about how we made righteous.

Romans chapter 4 verse 3 to 6. Let me read it out to you. Righteousness and wickedness are defined by faith. See here? Romans chapter 4 verse 3 to 6. For what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted, is credited as righteousness.

And he brought him outside and said, look toward heaven. And he numbered the stars. If you're able to number them. Then he said to him, so shall your offspring be. And he believed the Lord and he counted him, credited him as righteous.

So righteousness, Old Testament teaching, righteousness in the New Testament by the Apostle Paul is all about faith. Trusting the promises of God.

[11:37] Abraham believed God. And those of us who have submitted and trusted in the Lord Jesus as Saviour, we are the righteous ones.

You and I who trust in the Lord Jesus are the righteous ones. We are not evil. We are not wicked. We have been declared okay, declared right with God.

Right? That's the binary category. Now we sin, yes. We are prone to wander, yes. But we are in the righteous category.

Right? And David wrote the psalm. David who wrote the psalm was also in the righteous category.

The wicked person is someone who lives in rebellion against God as God.

The wicked person is someone who lives with themselves as God and they want to make the rules.

And so there's only two categories of people in the world.

[12:38] Get it clear. Be clear. Be convinced. The righteous and the unrighteous. The righteous and the wicked. Now that requires gospel shaped hearts and minds and eyes and biblically informed hearts and eyes and minds to see things the way that God sees things.

To see things the way they actually are. So the most kind and compassionate doctor who lives in defiance of God's righteous rule in their life.

Who is not submitted and trusted in Jesus Lord. Is actually, according to God's word, the scriptures, a wicked person. The bus driver who is the most smiling, welcoming, kind, compassionate bus driver in the world.

Who drops you off at your house rather than the bus stop. Alright? Who does not trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Does not submit to God and his word.

Who are they? Who are they? They are the wicked category. I don't think you believe me. Do you believe me?

[14:02] You don't like it, do you? I don't like it. But it's true. Now unless we see that.

We are out of step with God. And we can't read the Psalms. Rightly. This brings us to Psalm 37.

And the good news of the scriptures. So Psalm 37. The righteous person is someone and they need not fret when they see the evil person prosper.

That seems so unjust, doesn't it? Fret not yourself because of the evil doers. Be not envious of the wrong doers.

Like the drug dealer who makes a lot of money and appears to have it all. The amazing house. The collection of fine cars. The watches. The boats.

[15:10] The power to do anything they want to do. It's unjust when the wicked win. At the expense of the righteous. At the expense of the righteous. The crooked businessman promises to build you a house.

And then deliberately goes bankrupt the day after you've paid your deposit. Don't fret. Don't fret. Get closer to home.

You may think you're missing out being a Christian. Your non-Christian friends are much better off than you. Your non-Christian friends. The double income kids. No kids. The property portfolio. The regular overseas trips.

They're much better off than you. Don't fret. Think again. Fret here is the idea of burning with anger. Getting more and more agitated. Over the seemingly. Unjustness. Of the wicked prospering.

[16:08] The wicked getting ahead. When it seems that the evil do prosper. Even at your expense. Remember that the Lord will vindicate the righteous ones.

How so? Well. The evil do won't last. For they will soon fade like the grass. And wither like the green herb.

They'll soon fade like the grass. The monsters of history are unknown. To many are reviled by everyone who hears their name. I mean. Hitler was dead at 56.

Pol Pot. Dead at 72. Stalin. Dead at 74. Mussolini. Dead at 61. Caligula. Who lived around the same time as Jesus.

Dead at 28. Nero. Lived just 30 years. And there are many others. Right? But you. Would have to do some research. To find out who they were.

[17:04] Which just proves the point. Doesn't it? Even the memory of them having lived. Has gone from the general population. Just like everyone else has ever lived.

I mean. Most of us. Don't know the names. Of our. Great. Great.

Great. Grandparents. They've faded from history. So don't fret. The evil doers.

The wrong doers. Will soon fade from history. There's. There's nothing about them to envy. God will vindicate you. You see there. Verse 3 and 4.

4. Trust in the Lord. And do good. Dwell in the land. And befriend. Faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord. And he'll give you the desires. Of your heart. Keep trusting him.

[18:02] Dwell in the place. Where you're meant to live. The place Israel was supposed to inhabit. The place God gave you to live. Was the best place to live. Live under God's rule.

Delight in him. Marvel at God. Who he is. What he's done. Be satisfied in all he's given us. And he'll give you the desires. Of your heart. That's not a promise.

If we delight in the Lord. He'll give us the Maserati. Or the mansion. No. Or whatever she might desire. No. If you delight in the Lord. Let's hear this clearly. If you delight in the Lord.

Your heart. Wants. What he wants. Yeah. If you delight in the Lord. Your heart. Wants. What he wants.

And then he will give it to you. Delight in seeing his good plans. And purposes come together. Even when we don't quite see that immediately.

[19:03] To fret is similar to being anxious. And the antidote to anxiousness. Is to delight in the Lord. Verse 4. Delight in the Lord. And he'll give you the desires of your heart.

Jesus speaks about not being anxious. But rather seeking the kingdom of God. And his righteousness. And all these things. Will be added to you. Matthew chapter 6.

Verse 33. He'll provide everything we need. So don't fret. And this is a word to myself. Right. Don't get me wrong. A word to myself. Don't fret.

Rather be still before the Lord. Verse 7. And wait patiently for him. Be calm. Don't wring the hands in anxiety. Trust that God has got this.

He's behind everything. Bringing his good perfect plans to completion. Don't fret again. Verse 8. Refrain from anger. And forsake wrath. Fret not yourself.

[19:58] It tends only to evil. For the evildoer shall be cut off. But those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land. Don't fret when the wicked seem to prosper.

They will fade from history. They will be cut off. But the meek. Verse 11. Will inherit the land. The meek are those who patiently endure.

The meek choose the way of patient faith. Instead of self-assertion. Which is not only the teaching of David.

It's also the teaching of great David's son. Jesus. Himself. In Matthew chapter 5 verse 19. The evil person will not inherit the land.

Jesus says in Matthew chapter 5 verse 19. That blessed are the meek. For they shall inherit the earth. It's the meek.

[21:02] Who shall inherit the earth. The world. The wicked dictators want to rule the world.

Acquire it by their own evil use of power. The wicked property moguls. Want to own more and more for themselves. The wicked businessmen. Want a bigger and bigger market share for themselves.

The wicked farmer wants to store up bigger barns. And bigger wealth for themselves. But Jesus says you fool. In Luke 12. This night your soul is required of you.

And the things that you have prepared. Whose will they be? So is the one who lays up treasure for himself. Is not rich towards God. God says blessed are the meek. For they shall inherit the earth.

It's actually the meek. Who will be given. The world. As an inheritance. From God.

[21 : 58] The one who created it. In the first place. So don't fret. When it seems like the wicked. Seems to win and prosper in this world. They will fade from history.

They will be cut off. Mentoring glory. There's nothing to envy about that fate. I'm just going to insert an important caveat here.

The wicked. Need to hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We shouldn't rejoice.

In that fate. Now what follows is essentially. Proverbial contrast between the wicked and the righteous.

Giving us. The righteous. More and more reason. Not to fret. When it appears that the wicked are winning. And we dig further into the psalm. The echoes of Psalm 2.

[22 : 55] Keep bubbling to the surface. Resounding. See while the wicked plot. The Lord laughs. Do you see that there? Verses 12 to 20. Verse 12.

The wicked one plots against the righteous one. And gnashes his teeth at him. But verse 13. The Lord laughs at the wicked. For he sees that his day is coming. Just like in Psalm 2.

We read the Lord laughs at those who oppose him. It's futile to take on God. It's futile to take on the Lord's righteous one. The Lord Jesus Christ. It's futile to take on the Lord's righteous ones.

For the wicked person's day is coming. His day is the day when he will be called to account. And that day will be his downfall. And that day is coming.

And it's guaranteed. The gnashing of teeth is the grinding of teeth. It's fanatical hatred. What they plan to bring about on others will come back on themselves.

[23 : 54] You see there in verse 14 and 15. Their sword will enter their own heart and their bows shall be broken. The wicked are destroyed by their own cause eventually. And the Lord sees the victory is coming.

Just like in Acts chapter 7. Stephen's speech. Remember Stephen's speech? When he exposed the wickedness of the Jewish authorities. Who thought themselves to be the righteous ones. Who were actually the wicked ones.

In opposing God. And ultimately plotted and schemed against Jesus. Great David's greatest son. And having crucified. Actually brought about the plans of God that they sought to ruin.

To fulfilment. And the exaltation of Jesus the Christ. To be the risen Lord Christ. The one who rules and will judge them. And the one who will cut them off from glory.

I know. It's much better to be content with what we have in this world. Verses 16 to 19. The wicked will be defeated. The righteous will be upheld. And their heritage is eternal.

[24 : 59] Not like the wicked. Who are the enemies of the Lord. Who resist his righteous rule over them. There's nothing permanent about them. Like smoke. They vanish.

Like the vapour. Coming out of the kettle. Disappears. They had better live their best lives now. Right? For that is the best it will ever be.

But. The righteous. This life is this life. The best is yet to come. The righteous person is not fazed. Does not fret. Because our best life is yet to come. The one that surpasses everything this world could ever, ever give. See the Lord gives.

Verse 21 to 31. We see in verse 21 to 31 that the Lord not only laughs. But the Lord gives. While the wicked take. They borrow. But they do not pay back what they borrow.

[26 : 02] Effectively stealing. The righteous person gives. The righteous person is generous with what God has entrusted to them. And the reason is because God says again and again that they will inherit the land.

Did you see how many times it's repeated? The righteous will inherit the land over and over and over and over again. It's the constant theme of Psalm 37. And this is not just idealistic dreaming of the naive, gullible believer.

It's the reflection of King David in his later life. Do you see there in verse 25? I've been young and now I'm old.

Yet I've not seen the righteous forsaken. Don't fret when it appears that the wicked prosper. They may have it all.

But it's at best short lived. If you're tempted to think that being one of God's righteous ones limits your life and limits your joy. Then trust him and see with gospel shaped glasses that you are actually far, far, far better off than any of the wicked that you might want to envy.

[27 : 13] For unless the wicked repent of living with themselves as God, their joy and their prosperity will be taken away from them.

Don't be tempted to do evil and turn away from God for that is so short sighted. See verse 27. Turn away from evil and do good. So shall you dwell forever. For the Lord loves justice. He will not forsake the saints. They are preserved forever.

But the children of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell upon it forever. But the Lord's not stingy. We need to see that being righteous does not mean that we won't have joy and that life will be full of drudgery.

Far from it. For the Lord gives. Being righteous and living righteously now makes life so much better now and promises to be even better in the future.

[28 : 18] As Jesus taught in Mark chapter 10. Look at Mark chapter 10 verse 28 following. Peter began to say to him, see we've left everything and followed you. Jesus said, truly I say to you, there's no one who has left house or brother or sister or mother or father or children or lands for my sake in the gospel.

Who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands. All that stuff.

With persecutions. And in the age to come. Eternal life.

But many who are first will be last. And the last first. So the Lord laughs. The Lord gives. And finally the Lord saves.

Verse 32 to 40. Don't fret when you think that the wicked win. Instead wait. Right? Wait for the Lord to bring about the great reversal of fortunes.

[29 : 27] Wait for God to exalt the righteous and cut off the wicked. The wicked don't last. The righteous will. Remember the Lord saves. There's no future for the wicked.

Their end is catastrophically bad. They don't win. There may be times of trouble for the righteous. Yes. In fact. Jesus promises that there will be.

But God ultimately saves the righteous. He delivers the righteous from the wicked and saves the righteous. Because.

Well. You see there verse 40. They take refuge in him. As Jesus so proved.

And Peter records for us. We read last year in 1 Peter chapter 2. Jesus committed no sin. Neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he is reviled.

[30 : 28] He did not revile in return. When he suffered. He did not threaten. But continued entrusting himself. To him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins. In his body on the tree. That we might die to sins.

And live for righteousness. By his wounds. You have been healed. Jesus is truly the righteous one. Who always submitted to the father.

Who committed no sin. There was no wickedness in him at all. And when tempted by the wicked one. That life would be better by following the evil one. Refused to take the shortcut.

Refused to believe the lie. And waited. He considered the joy of the kingdom of God. As infinitely greater. And so entrust to him.

Who judges justly. And notice too. That in doing so. This righteous one. Made it possible. For wicked ones. To become righteous. By bearing the sins.

[31 : 25] And the wrath of the wicked ones. In his body. For us. For the world. By the wounds of the righteous one.

By the righteous one. Suffering in our place. We who were once the wicked. Have become righteous. And so we who believe.

Are not cut off. No. But rather. Lord graciously gives the land. He gives. The kingdom of God. He gives. The earth.

The world. Heaven. The new creation. To live. For all eternity. Nothing. Nothing that we could have in this world. Is worth fretting about. For God himself has promised.

That he will vindicate. He will be proven right. And we will be proven right. God himself laughs at those who plot against him. And his righteous ones.

[32 : 25] God himself gives. When the wicked actually plot to take. God himself ultimately saves. And God himself ultimately saves. Brothers and sisters. We're on the winning team.

Be assured. The wicked won't win. And when tempted to think that the wicked are better off than the righteous. Remember this. Be assured. The wicked. Do not win.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven. Thank you for your word. Please help us when we are tempted.

To see that this world and all that's in it. Is better. Than trusting and waiting and following you.
Please help us to have gospel shaped.
Biblically shaped. Eyes and hearts and minds. As we live in your world. For your glory. And we pray
in Jesus name. Amen.