

## **Eight Great Precepts**

Sunday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1985

### **Psalm 37**

I would like for you to open your Bible to the Book of Psalms. I'm going to be speaking today from Psalm 37 on the subject: "EIGHT GREAT PRECEPTS."

I would like very much if you would turn to Psalm 37. I believe that it would be great blessing to you if you will turn to the Scriptures, get a pen and plan to mark these great eight precepts; especially to those who know Christ, those who love the Gospel and who rest in the Redeemer.

The author of Psalm 37 is David; it is a Psalm of David. He wrote it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,*" (God breathed) as the Scripture says.

The time of the writing of this Psalm is revealed in verse 25; David said, "*I have been young and now am old.*" So, David wrote this Psalm in his old age, in his mature years.

The subject of this Psalm should be very interesting to you. It is very similar to Psalm 73. Just take Psalm 37 and turn it around. Psalm 73 really deals with the same subject. This Psalm has to do with the prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions, poverty and persecution of God's people.

David wrote it in his old age, and the subject of the Psalm is "The Prosperity of the Wicked." Have you ever thought about that, how the wicked prosper and are famous? The wicked live in luxury and ease while some of God's children are afflicted, suffer, live in poverty and do without?

God's children still love God and love His Word and are faithful to the Gospel. Men are wicked, blasphemous and despise God and have no interest in the Gospel. It seems like everything they touch turns to gold.

David wrote about this in Psalm 37. Here are some of the complaints and questions which were raised and answered in this Psalm:

First of all: The wicked seem to prosper and succeed (and they do, there is no denying that). The wealthier a man is, usually, the more vile, blasphemous and wicked he is. That is true in many cases; you know it and I know it. These wicked men prosper and succeed while they despise, deny, and hate God.

Another issue is raised: The true believer, the true child of God is unknown and is unrecognized. Generally, the people of God are a very small influence; they don't amount to anything. No one regards them at all as being important. They are unknown, unrecognized and are not influential.

The wicked ridicule God's people; they ridicule God's Word and they ridicule the sacrifice of Christ. They plot and they scheme against the truth. They mistreat the people of God and want all mention of God taken off of money, out of the Pledge of Allegiance, out of the schools and everywhere else. They just don't want God; they want freedom, not of religion, but freedom from religion.

Thirdly: The wicked take advantage of poor people. Some wicked, religious people take advantage of poor people too. Yet, they continue to get richer, "more prosperous and fatter," the Word says.

Fourthly: The wicked unbelievers are a great majority. Most people do not know God and do not believe God. Those who do believe God are those who are like a small flock in a great wilderness of trouble, trial and sin.

In light of all this, David, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and as a man mature in years, was rich in experience and rich in the faith of God. David gives us eight, great, precepts or directions for believers. I would like for you to follow along in your Bible as I point these eight great precepts:

The first precept is found in Psalm 37:1; David says, "*Fret not thyself because of these evildoers; neither be thou envious of the workers of iniquity.*" Don't burn with jealousy; when you see these wicked men, these blasphemers who deny God and hate the Gospel, don't envy them or get angry with them.

When you see them prosper in good health, driving expensive cars, living in palatial homes and scarcely working, don't envy them and don't get angry with them; don't be jealous of them for two reasons:

First of all: David says, "*They shall soon be cut off.*" That's right; "*They shall be cut down as grass; they shall wither as the green herb. Their foot shall slide in God's own time.*" Don't envy them; "*they are going to be cut down like mown grass and wither like a green herb.*"

Second: Don't be envious of these wicked people; they have all that they will ever have. It is true that many of them spend their days on earth in ease and in luxury; "*they soon*

*shall be cut off.*” They won’t only be cut off from this life but from eternal life. They won’t only be cut off from men but they will be cut off from God.

Were it not for God’s grace, we would be just like them; did you know that? That ought to help us not to be angry with them. The fact that they soon shall be cut off, the fact that this is all that they will ever have in this life ought to keep us from being jealous or envious of any evil, wicked, man who does not know God. Only by God’s grace are we not like them.

I have a preacher friend down in Knoxville, Tennessee, a very fine, black preacher. He pastors a black Baptist church near Knoxville, Tennessee; I preached for him recently. He told me about the days that he was growing up in the South, down in Murray, Ky. He told me about this white man; for whom he worked. I could tell you his name, but I won’t.

This man was so cruel to him and cruel to his family. This man paid him practically nothing. He worked him for nothing. This was back in the 1950’s. He mistreated him badly. One day they were out on the street and this man spit in his grandfather’s face. He couldn’t lift his hand because you know what would happen.

One day he was arrested for walking into the bank beside a white woman. Oppression and persecution were brought about by this evil, rich, man, (a white man), for whom he worked. When this preacher friend of mine reached 40 years of age, (he was a successful preacher of the Gospel), went back to Murray, Ky. to speak. This was 20 or 22 years later.

In the congregation was a white-haired, white woman. After the service was over, she came down and put her arms around him and kissed him on the cheek. She said, “Dennis; do you remember me?” He didn’t remember her.

She said, “I am the wife of the man for whom you worked for 22 years ago, who treated you so terribly. He is dead now and he died a horrible death; he didn’t weigh but 76 pounds when he died. He died in misery.”

I’m telling you this; our God said, “*Don’t you fret because of evildoers; (don’t you fret because of those who are wicked); don’t you fret against these workers of iniquity; they will be cut off in God’s own time. These workers of iniquity will wither like the green grass and will be cut down as the green herb.*” Don’t envy them, God will deal with them. Don’t be angry against them and don’t waste your time.

In verse 3, David talks about another precept: *“Trust in the Lord.”* Trust not in riches. Riches are not a foundation. Trust not in the arm of the flesh. The arm of the flesh is no foundation. Trust in the Lord; *“Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh from the Lord.”*

You see, my friend; material and physical things shall soon fade away; they shall soon pass away. They are not worth the time that it will take you to achieve them or to accomplish them; these things are nothing but soap bubbles.

The grace of God is forever. *“The fashion of this world fadeth away.”* These clothes that I have on will rot and decay but the *“Word of God abideth forever.”* The grace of God endures forever. The mercy of God is forever.

Trust in the Lord. Don't trust in these riches. Don't trust in the arm of the flesh. Don't trust in the power or strength of men; they will fail. God never fails.

Trust Him for pardon. David wrote in Psalm 103; *“Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me, bless His Holy name, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who satisfieth thy mouth with good things.”* He does all this for me; men don't do this for me, God does.

Trust the Lord for daily provisions; *“Give us this day our daily bread.”* Trust the Lord for Divine protection; *“He will give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways.”* Trust the Lord for His good providence, Abraham did and he is our pattern of faith; *“Abraham believed God and it was counted him for righteousness.”*

He didn't know where he was going. The Lord told him to get out of his father's house and go to a land that He would show him. He believed God even though he didn't know where he was going.

God told him when he was 100 years old that he was going to have a son. Abraham believed God again, even though he didn't know how. God told him to take that boy and sacrifice him on a mountain as a sin-offering; not knowing why, he went. Abraham didn't question the Lord; he trusted the Lord.

I wish I could learn that don't you? Don't question the Lord, trust the Lord. Don't find fault with God's good providence; trust Him.

Did you ever say that to your children when they were growing up? You might have been going down the street and he may have asked you where you were going. You

probably told him to trust you or not to question you. If my children can trust me, we can infinitely trust our Heavenly Father much more, I fail and I make mistakes. He never does. I don't know much. *"He never fails,"* you can trust Him.

Thirdly: The third precept is in verse 4: *"Delight thyself in the Lord and He will give thee the desires of thine heart. Delight thyself in the Lord."* The believer is exhorted not to fret but is exhorted to trust the Lord.

He is exhorted not only to *"fret not"* but also to *"trust the Lord"* and rejoice in the Lord. That is what Paul was saying, *"Whatever state I am in, to be content; I rejoice in the Lord."* He said, *"I know how to abound; I know how to be abased, but I delight in the Lord."*

Paul was in prison, writing to the church at Philippi. In those four chapters he used the word *"rejoice"* ten times. Psalm 1:2 says, *"His delight is in the Law of the Lord;"* (that is that man that was planted by the river of the water of life), that man who *"bringeth forth his fruit in his season."* *"His delight is in the Law of the Lord."*

In Psalm 40, Christ says; *"I delight to thy will O God."* Psalm 94:19 says, *"Thy mercy and thy comfort delight my soul."* Psalm 119:24 says, *"The Word of God is my delight."* Song of Solomon 2:3 proclaims, *"I sat down under His shadow with great delight."* Isaiah 58:2 says, *"I take great delight in approaching the Lord God."*

You know my friend; someone said this one time, "The presence of the Lord and the promises of His Word make a mighty soft pillow when a man is dying but the way of the transgressor is hard."

The Scripture says, *"Blessed is the man who can delight himself in the Lord."*

You don't find delight in jewelry, fine clothes, big homes, influence, prestige and position in this world; it will all pass away. You won't be dead five years and people will be saying, "George who?"

Let me ask you this; who was the running-mate of George McGovern when he ran against the president who was elected some years ago? He was on the ticket as the vice-president of the United States. Most people don't even know who he was. Most people don't even know who the vice-president of the United States is now let alone someone who ran some time ago.

You won't be gone five days and they will be asking who you were. They won't ask who you are in glory if your name is written in the Book of Life. These things don't amount to much; I don't know why we think they do.

Verse 5 gives you the fourth precept: "*Commit thy way unto the Lord. Trust also in him and He will bring it to pass. Cast all your cares on Him; He cares for you.*" Cast away your anxiety, worry and fear and resign your will, your life, and your family to His care; "*He careth for you.*"

You know; the farmer teaches us a lesson along this line, this committing ourselves unto the Lord; "*He will bring it to pass.*" The farmer goes out and plows the field. He disks the field and tears it up. He rows the field off and plants a seed and covers it up.

Now, what does he do? He doesn't do anything except wait on the Lord. That seed is committed to that ground looking to the Lord of the harvest to give it life, make it bud and to bring it forth.

This is what David is saying, "*Commit your way unto the Lord,*" your salvation, your present, your future and your family, to the Lord God, just take it to the Lord as the old hymn writer said, "and leave it there:"

"If the world from you withhold  
Of its silver and its gold,  
And you have to get along  
With meager fair.

Just remember in His Word  
How He feeds the little bird,

Take your burden to the Lord  
And leave it there.

If your body suffers pain  
And your health you can't regain,  
And your soul is almost sinking in despair,

Jesus the Lord knows the pain you feel  
He can save and He can heal,  
Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there.

When your youthful days are gone,  
And old age is stealing on  
And your body bends beneath the weight of care.

He will never leave you then,  
He'll go with you to the end,  
So take your burden to the Lord and leave it there."

That is what I mean when I say, "*Commit thy way unto the Lord.*" Did you leave your burden there? He will bring it to pass.

Fifthly: In verse 7; mark this down; "*Rest in the Lord.*" We are told to trust in the Lord; we are told to commit our way unto the Lord and now "*Rest.*" That is what I am talking about when I say, "Leave it there."

"*Trust the Lord.*" I trust the Lord, yet we act like we don't. We are fretting, worrying and fretful. We are just beside ourselves. We are a bundle of nerves; He said, "*Rest.*" *Trust the Lord; commit your ways to Him and rest; wait patiently on Him.*"

There are so many promises in this Book, the Bible concerning the word "*rest.*" "*He giveth His beloved rest*" (or sleep). Our Lord said, "*Come unto Me and I will give you rest. Take your yoke upon you and learn of me and you will find rest unto your souls.*" Paul talks about us "*ceasing from our labors and entering into His rest.*"

Our whole Gospel is a Gospel of rest. Our Gospel is not a Gospel of "do" it is a Gospel of "tis done; the great transaction is done." God says, "*Be still and know that I am God.*"

When you were raising your children, did you ever have them fidgeting in your lap? You would say, "be still," that is what God is saying to you, "*be still and know that I am God.*"

The soul of the unbeliever is like "*the troubled sea,*" the waves are dashing and tossing the ship about. "*He leadeth us beside still waters.*"

God killed Nadab and Abihu. Do you know who they were? These were sons of Aaron. They were the fellows "*who offered strange fire on the altar of God.*" Moses and Aaron were witnesses of this and God killed Nadab and Abihu. They were subjects led by Moses but they were sons of Aaron.

Moses told Aaron, “Aaron; the Lord killed those boys because of their blasphemy and their rebellion; they violated the altar of God, (the type of Christ). God killed them. Do you know what it says about Aaron? The Scripture says, *“He held his peace,”* we need to just hold our peace.

That is what Eli did too, when the Lord killed his sons; he held his peace and said; *“It is the Lord; let Him do what He will.”*

That is what Job did; he held his peace. Job said, *“The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”*

Oh, to learn to hold my peace! You can, if *“you rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. He will bring it to pass.”*

The sixth precept is found in verse 8: *“Cease from anger; forsake wrath. Fret not thyself in any way to do evil.”* Isn't this difficult? Yet, this is a precept of Almighty God to His church, His people.

*“Cease from anger”* either against God's providence or against men. *“Cease from anger”* against God's providence; God is the first cause of all things. You might as well cease to be angry with men because they are the second cause, the instruments of God's providence.

James 1:20 says, *“The wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God.”* Our anger does not change the situation; it just makes it worse. *“Fret not thyself to get even; fret not thyself to get revenge,”* for He says; *“vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”* He always repays. God always pays His notes, His bills and He will in due time.

It would do well for us to learn this and here is something that I want to work on. This is something that is helpful to me when I remember it. It would do well for us to learn that the battle against evil in any form is not our battle; it is God's battle. It is not my battle it is God's battle.

Evil men are God's enemies. David said, *“They are your enemies, God.”* I will guarantee you that He will deal with His enemies. He told our Lord Jesus, *“Come and sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.”* Whose enemies is He talking about? He is talking about Christ's enemies.

This battle is not my battle; it is God's battle. I will be willing to be used in any way that He wants to use me for whatever purpose He wishes to use me. This is His battle and

they are His enemies. He will destroy them. *“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”*

You see; *“We wrestle not against flesh and blood.”* This is not a flesh and blood battle. *“We wrestle against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places and rulers of darkness.”* You don’t even know who they are.

If there is a blow to be struck, God will have to strike it. You don’t know where to hit. You will hit some poor flesh. It won’t do you a bit of good because he is not the cause, he is the second cause.

Here is the next precept, in verse 27, this is a double-precept: *“Depart from evil and do good.”* Paul deals with that in Romans 12:17; he says, *“Recompense to no man evil for evil.”* Do not get even; *“provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible as much as lieth in you; live peaceably with all men.”*

Try to live peacefully with your neighbors. Live peacefully with your in-laws. Live peacefully with all men. *“Dearly beloved; avenge not yourselves; give place to wrath. It is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”*

*“Therefore, if your enemy hunger; feed him. If your enemy thirsts; give him a drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Don’t be overcome with evil.”* Don’t let evil overcome you. Don’t use their tactics, don’t use their ways. *“Overcome evil with good.”*

Here is the last precept in verse 34: *“Wait on the Lord; keep His way and He will exalt you to inherit the land.”* Stand in the way of Christ; *“and having done all of this to stand.”* Stay on the rock Christ Jesus. Keep to the Gospel of saving grace and wait on God.

Don’t bind God with a time or an hour; just wait on Him. In due time He will bring it to pass.

“In heaven and earth and sky and seas  
He executes His wise decrees,  
And all His saints can in Him rest  
For He does, I know, what is always best.

Wait then, my soul, patiently wait,  
Prostrate before His Mercy Seat,

And through this dark and cloudy day,  
Wait on the Lord and keep His way.”

His way is Christ!