

3/15/26, **Psalm 37**

How Should We Then Live?

Pastor Dean VanEvery

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the more basic desires of the human heart is consistency. The more we think about our lives, the more we want our lives to be *consistent*. We want what we do, how we live, the way we spend our days, our weeks, our money, our energy, to line up with, to be consistent with what we believe to be true about the world. We want our actions to be a reflection of our beliefs.

If we believe something is true, we want to live like it's true. If we believe something is good, we want to pursue it. If we believe something is a waste of time, we don't want to spend time doing it.

This is why, "so what?" is such a common follow up question. Someone waxes poetic about some profound truth, or some intricate idea, and you listen patiently enough, but when they finish up you want to know, "ok, so what?" What do I do with that? How should that actually play out in my life?

There's a certain relationship between beliefs and actions. What you affirm, and how you live.

One way that we see this play out is how we often respond to our own sin. Often, a sense of *inconsistency* is one of the worst parts of our grief over our own sin. First, when we sin, when we give in to that habit, or fall back on that old pattern, or snap in a moment of temptation, when we sin, first, we feel a sense of guilt and shame for sinning against God, for offending our Creator, for displeasing our Redeemer and Father.

Often, second, when we sin against someone else, we feel bad for how we hurt them.

But then in the mix, and often this lingers the longest, is the sting of the sense of our inconsistency. Sometimes it's as mild as a simple "ah, I thought I was past this already," but sometimes it's as sharp as "a real Christian wouldn't have done what I just did."

Either way, it's basically that desire for consistency asserting itself. What I believe to be true – the goodness of God, the sweetness of godliness, the worthiness of God's law, the wickedness of sin – my beliefs, are inconsistent with my actions – that anger, or self-indulgence, or lust, or greed.

So sometimes, this hunger for consistency pricks us when we violate it, when we do something inconsistent with our beliefs. But often consistency shows up in that simple question, "so what?" Or, "What now?" What do I do with this?

This is why preaching the gospel, or teaching the Bible, should always move towards application. If Jesus is Lord of my life, what does that mean? What should that look like for me?

This really clicked for me in one of my preaching classes a few years back. The professor was talking about interpretive methods and tools and then was bringing in the idea of application. He posed the issue of how application relates to interpretation.

He was making this point: for any other body of literature, ancient philosophers, Shakespeare, whatever, interpretation and application are two separate issues. There's interpretation over here – what did the author intend to communicate to his original audience? Then there's application over there – what can I learn from this? How can I apply it in my own setting?

For the Bible, God is the author, and you are the original audience. So that means, for teaching the Bible, or for understanding the Bible for yourself, you haven't finished the

interpretation process until you've gotten to application. Until you understand how this text applies to your life, you haven't yet understood the point of the text.

The Apostle Paul makes this point in 1 Corinthians 10, where he first describes a bunch of events that took place in Exodus, and Numbers, and Deuteronomy, then he wraps it up with verse 11, **“Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.”**

In other words, the Old Testament was written down for the sake of teaching you how to live Christianly.

What am I getting at? And what does all this have to do with Psalm 37? Basically this, that desire for consistency, that desire to apply the teaching in a consistent way is right, good, and biblical.

This Psalm is very application heavy. Psalm 37 is basically the practical application of Psalm 36. Given what Psalm 36 teaches us about the covenant love of God in Christ, Psalm 37 teaches us what to do with that. How to live in light of God's covenant love in Christ.

Way back when Pastor Michael started this series in the Psalms, one of the points that he drove home was that there is a thoughtful structure to the Psalms. They aren't just 150 poems kind of thrown together. There is a reason to their organization. There is a general flow in the whole book from lament to praise. There are collections of Psalms that work together, like we saw in Psalms 15 through 24. And often, two Psalms will work together on a single theme, the second picking up where the first left off.

Psalms 36 and 37 are a case of that happening. Grab one of those Bible from the seats in front of you if you don't have one of your own. It will help to see this connection for yourself. In the blue Bibles you'll be on page 465 and 466.

Psalm 36 is gospel doctrine, and Psalm 37 is gospel living. Psalm 36 is gospel substance, Psalm 37 is gospel form. Psalm 36 shows us the contours of how to receive the gospel, and Psalm 37 shows us the contours of how to live the gospel. Psalm 36, is about what it means to *enter into* God's covenant, and Psalm 37 is about what it means to *live in* God's covenant.

One way that we see this connection is how the end of Psalm 36 lines up with the beginning of Psalm 37. This should signal for us that we aren't totally changing gears. Psalm 36 ends saying, **“let not... the hand of the wicked drive me away. There the evildoers lie fallen; they are thrust down, unable to rise.”** And Psalm 37 begins with **“Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers.”**

These are two distinct Psalms, they have their own inner logic, their own distinct messages, and yet they are linked, the one picks up where the other leaves off.

What that means is that this is not just a Psalm about how God wants you to live, but this is a Psalm about how God wants you to live as a redeemed partaker in his covenant.

In other words, Psalm 37 addresses us as those who have already received the steadfast, covenant love of God through faith. This addresses us as those who (from Psalm 36:7) take refuge in the shadow of God's wings. This Psalm addresses us as those who (from Psalm 36:8) feast on the abundance of his house, and drink from his river of delights. It addresses us as those who (from Psalm 36:9) have drunk from the fountain of life and see light in God's light.

Psalm 37 presupposes saving faith. It presupposes forgiveness of sins through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Psalm 37 is not about how to be a good person on your own power, but how to live as a subject of King Jesus – saved through faith, renewed by the Holy Spirit. Psalm 37 teaches us what consistency should look like for the Christian.

## OUTLINE

Let's go ahead and get into this text.

First, let me give you a rough sketch of the skeleton of this Psalm.

Verses 1 through 6 are the introduction and the main point. I'm going to spend most of our time this morning just looking at verse 3. Verses 1 and 2 set up verse three with a sort of negative, what not to do, then verses 4 through 6 give us three key expansions and applications. But then, the rest of the Psalm is a walk through what it looks like to do verse 3.

Look at verse 3. **“Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.”** This is the point. This is the big idea. How should we live? Trust God. Do good. Dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.

That's the point, and that's also the basic structure of the Psalm.

Verses 7 through 17 expands on what it means to “trust God.”

Verses 18 through 26 expands on what it means to “do good.”

And verses 27 through 34 expand on what it means to “dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.”

Then verses 35 through 40 are a kind of summary and conclusion.

Verses 7 through 17: trust God.

18 through 26: do good.

27 through 34: dwell in the land.

## PART 1: 1-3 AS A WHOLE

Ok, zoom in on verses 1 through 3. Again, this is the whole Psalm in a nutshell.

Everything that this Psalm says is packed in these verses in seed form. Verse 3 is the big idea,

and verses 1 and 2 set it up basically by way of a negative contrast. Before David says, “here’s how to live” first he says, “don’t live like this.”

Verse 1, **“Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers!”**

This is a really helpful way to start this Psalm. What he’s doing here is very compactly laying out the two basic ditches that we need to be aware of when it comes to relating with the world.

Those two ditches are fear and envy. Or to use different terms, retreat and assimilation. Refusing to be light, refusing to be a city on a hill. And refusing to be salt.

The first ditch, fear, either gives in to anxiety and despair, or given the opportunity, goes into retreat. I’m overwhelmed by the worldliness of the world, so I’m just going to either fret about it all day long, or try to escape it.

The other ditch, envy, in one way or another just wants to be like the world. You might want to fit in, you might want praise and reputation, you might just really not like conflict, or you might just want to indulge in some sinful pleasures. This ditch looks at the world and says, “that looks kind of nice.”

This plays out at both the personal level, and the institutional level. We as individuals need to be aware of these temptations, and we as a church need to be aware of these two ditches.

The world is going to try to either intimidate you away from faithfulness, or it’s going to try to tempt you. If it can’t push you, it’ll try to pull you.

The world will try to intimidate you to conform, or if it can’t it’ll try to get you hooked on porn to weaken your resolve.

When you’re thinking about what it looks like to live Christianly, the first thing you need to realize is that there is a defense on the field. There is another force working against you. The world is going to try to call you mean names to get you to back away from basic Christian

faithfulness. And the world is going to try to appeal to your base desires to make you blend right in with the world and make your faithfulness impotent.

If the world can't intimidate you by calling you a fundamentalist, or a Christian Nationalist, it will try to compromise you with legal pot, legal sports betting, and free porn in your pocket.

Verse 1, he says, heads up! There's a defense on the field! Don't fear them, and don't envy them. Don't let them intimidate you, don't let them entice you.

But then, in verse 2, he gives a reason why we shouldn't fear them. And this is really encouraging, if we will let this say what it says, this is really encouraging.

Verse 2, **"For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb."**

The wicked are temporary squatters. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus says, **"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."** The church has had enemies before. The church has been in decline before. But the church has always remained.

Nero came to nothing. Rome was converted. The goths and vandals (historic people groups from the ancient world, not just rowdy teenagers) became Christians. The Saxons converted. The Muslim conquest was repelled at Vienna. In the Reformation half of Europe escaped from Rome, and recovered the gospel. The Third Reich fell. The Soviets dissolved. Liberal Christianity is a husk and an echo of its former self. The so-called New Atheists are irrelevant today. The so-called Emergent Church has submerged.

Christ has had enemies before. The church has had enemies before. They all tend to disappear. They all tend to **fade like grass, and wither like the green herb**. So, take heart. That group that is intimidating you, or enticing you will someday be a footnote in some history book.

Alright then we get to verse 3. Don't fear the world, don't envy the world. How should we then live?

Verse 3, **“<sup>3</sup>Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.”**

There are three instructions here: 1) trust the Lord, 2) do good, 3) dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.

Like I mentioned before, this is the big idea, then the rest of the Psalm expands on these ideas.

All three of these ideas, these commands, they bleed over into one another. So, these really aren't three totally distinct ideas, there is a lot of overlap. A part of trusting the Lord is trusting his revealed will, and doing his will, doing good. And (I'll explain this more when we get there) you can't really 'dwell in the land faithfully' without trusting the Lord and doing good, and trusting the Lord and doing good really adds up to dwelling faithfully.

These ideas have a lot of overlap. Think of these like three ways of looking at the same basic idea. Think of these as *three aspects of faithful Christian living*.

What I want to do, is use these three commands as a lens to look at the rest of the Psalm. The rest of the Psalm expands on what these commands mean, and these commands focus what the rest of the Psalm is saying. I won't cover every detail, but I'll try to give you the overview. Let's jump in.

## **PART 2: TRUST GOD (7-17)**

Ok, the first aspect of faithful Christian living is *trusting the Lord*. Faithfulness begins with faith.

Now remember, this Psalm is primarily addressed to those who already belong to God by faith in Jesus – this Psalm, this call to faithful living presupposes saving faith. So, this call to trust God is not so much saying, “trust God for the forgiveness of sins,” as “trust God with your life, with your years, and with your days.”

You already do trust God for forgiveness, now trust him for provision. You already do trust God with your eternity, now trust God with your week. You trust God for eternal life, now trust God with temporal life. You trust him with the big thing, now trust him with the small thing.

Look at verses 7 through 17, this is where David digs a bit more into the idea of trusting God. 7 through 17.

There are two halves of trusting God that this Psalm weaves together. There’s trusting God’s secret will, and trusting God’s revealed will.<sup>1</sup>

God’s *secret* will is his will that he hasn’t revealed to us. It’s another way of talking about his providential government over history. He’s given us the big picture of how this whole story wraps up, but he hasn’t revealed his will for all the details along the way.

Trusting God’s secret will has to do with contentment, we talked about this a few weeks ago with Psalm 34.

So then, trusting God’s *revealed* will is trusting that his commands are good and right. God’s revealed will is another way of describing his commandments, or his law. God has revealed the way that he wants us to live. We trust God’s revealed will by living according to his law even when it’s inconvenient, hard, opposed by the world, or even seems foolish in our own eyes.

Trusting God’s revealed will has to do with obedience.

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<sup>1</sup>Deuteronomy 29:29, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

Notice how David weaves together these two halves of trusting God's will here in these verses, especially verses 7 through 9.

Verse 7, wait for the Lord, trust his secret will.

Verse 8, don't take vengeance into your own hands, trust and obey God's revealed will.

Verse 9, trust God because the wicked will fade, the godly will be established.

It is difficult to really separate these two kinds of trust. Temptation to disobey God, to distrust his revealed will, is usually rooted in distrust in God's secret will. And trust in God's secret will is a strong foundation for obedience in his revealed will.

Temptations towards disobedience usually come on the back of temptations to discontentment.

Ok, three application points from these 11 verses.

One, verses 7-9, cultivate patience in the face of the difficulties of life.

Two, verse 10, have confidence in God and his purposes. **"In just a little while,"** David says here in verse 10, **"the wicked will be no more."** Jesus really is building his church. The gates of hell really won't stand against it.

Three, verse 11, pursue contentment. **"The meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace."**

Biblical meekness is not timidity. Biblical meekness is not avoiding conflict. Biblical meekness is Moses standing before Pharaoh.

Biblical meekness is a humility before God that would rather offend the whole world than offend God.

Biblical meekness is an inward contentment rooted in trust in God's secret will and confidence rooted in trust in God's revealed will. Biblical meekness is contentment joined with obedience.

### **PART 3: DO GOOD (18-26)**

Next, look at verses 18 through 26. The first aspect of faithful Christian living is *trusting the Lord*. The second aspect of faithful Christian living is *doing good*.

This section starts with something of a transitional statement from one idea to the next. Look at verse 18, **“the Lord knows the days of the blameless.”** This means that the Lord watches over them, he guards them. It's like when Jesus says that the good shepherd knows his sheep. It's not just a bare mental awareness, it's a protective, fatherly knowledge. He watches over them, he protects them, he guides them.

He's connecting the ideas of doing good, “the blameless” and trust, God knows their days.

Doing good flows out of trust. True good works are a fruit of faith.

Notice verse 22, this is really interesting. There is one idea that connects these three blocks, one common idea that gets repeated. In each of these sections there is the repeated idea that God's people will “inherit the land.”

Verse 11, in the section on trusting God says that the meek shall inherit the land. That makes sense, those who trust the Lord.

Then verse 29 in the section on dwelling faithfully in the land, it says that the righteous shall inherit the land, *and dwell upon it forever* – a pretty straight forward reference to the “dwell in the land” idea.

But then notice this: here in verse 22, in the section on doing good, David says, **“those blessed by the Lord shall inherit the land, but those cursed by him shall be cut off.”**

There is an echo here of the early chapters of Genesis. In Genesis 3, we see that the whole world fell under curse through the sin of Adam.

But then in Genesis 12 we see that God promised to bring about global blessing through the seed of Abraham – the promised messiah. And that promise was wrapped up in God’s promise to Abraham to give his descendants the land of Canaan.

This is interesting. In the section expanding what it means to ‘do good’ David wants to root this goodness not in our own merit, but in the blessing of Christ. Doing good is a fruit of God’s blessing, not the ground of God’s blessing.

Ok, there are three lessons about doing good that we should draw from these verses.

First, doing good matters. Faith alone saves, but saving faith never stays alone, but always produces works. James says this in his letter, James 2:17, **“Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”** Doing good matters.

Second, doing good is a gift. Works are the fruit of faith, and faith is a gift of God. Look at verse 23. **“The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way.”**

In other words, when God is pleased with you, when he delights in your way, he establishes your steps, he causes you to do good. God’s pleasure in you is the cause of your good works, not the result. God’s delight in you in Christ comes first, then works follow.

Think about the idea of sanctification – the process of growing in practical godliness and holiness. Increasing sanctification, growing godliness is *evidence* of God’s delight in you in Christ, not the cause of it.

Don't look at how far you have to go as evidence that God is not yet fully pleased with you. Look at how far he has brought you as evidence that he already delights in you in Christ. He knows where you're at. He knows how far you have to go. You are on his timeline. He is not surprised by your lingering sin. He'll get you there.

All real growth in godliness is a result of his delight in you in Christ.

Here's how it works. First, God gives you faith, then you believe and are justified, blessed by God. Then, through that faith, already being saved, God establishes your good works.

Your good works are a gift from God to you, not from you to God.

This isn't unique to this verse.

Psalm 119:133, **“keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me.”**

Philippians 2:13, **“<sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”**

Ephesians 2:8-10, **“<sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*”**

Good works aren't a gift that we give to God, but they are a gift that God gives to us.

This is why, by universal Christian experience, every Christian knows that when you are experiencing some victory over some significant sin, the right response is “thank you,” not “you're welcome.”

The Christian, when he realizes that he's been sober for a whole year, instinctively thanks God.

When the Christian realizes that it's been months since the last time she snapped at her kids, she doesn't pause and say a little prayer to offer God a little "you're welcome." No, she says, "thank you!" Thank you for changing me.

Doing good matters, second, doing good is a gift from God, then third, doing good is a life of repentance, not perfection.

Look at verse 24, **"Though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand."**

Notice this, this is important. Faithful Christian living, a life of doing good, is a life of repentance.<sup>2</sup>

The difference between the blameless and the wicked isn't that one sins and the other doesn't, it's that when the Christian sins, God restores him to repentance. God holds his hand. When he trips, he doesn't always fall, and when he falls God lifts him back up through repentance.

It's easy to get into the mindset that God delights in you because you don't sin as much as you used to, but in reality it's the other way around. You don't sin as much as you used to because God delights in you in Christ.

It's easy to think that God holds your hand because you're better at walking now. But in reality, you've gotten better at walking because God holds your hand.

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<sup>2</sup>Martin Luther, 95 Thesis, #1, When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent" (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.

Doing good matters, doing good is a gift, doing good is a life of repentance.

#### **PART 4: DWELL IN THE LAND AND BEFRIEND FAITHFULNESS (27-34)**

Ok, look next at verses 27 through 34. The third aspect of faithful Christian living is *dwelling in the land and befriending faithfulness*.

First, just notice verse 27, “**do good; so shall you dwell forever.**” Again, just notice that these three aspects are all woven together. Trusting God, doing good, and dwelling faithfully are all bound up together.

Ok, what does it mean to dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness? I’ll give you my answer, then show you how I get there. To dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness means to live in light of 1) your connection to the past, 2) your connection to the present, and 3) your connection to the future.

To dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness means to see yourself as the recipient of history, a part of the present, and a steward of both the past and the present for the coming generations.

To the Israelite, “the land” wasn’t just the place that they happened to live. It tied them back to the promises to the Patriarchs, to Abraham, and David. And it tied them to the promised coming Messiah. The seed of Abraham would come through the people of Abraham living in the promised land. So, dwelling in the land meant living in light of the future fulfillment of promises given to the patriarchs.

And life in the present was shaped by those two realities. In light of the promises to Abraham, and in light of the fulfillment of those promises in the coming Christ, life in the now

takes on a certain shape. Family life is shaped by those two poles. Community life, political life, religious life, all takes on a certain shape and form given the promises and their future fulfilment.

To dwell faithfully in the land, for the ancient Israelite, meant to see yourself as one who had inherited incredible and great promises, and who had a weighty stewardship to do what you can to build up the community to live faithfully in light of those promises, both in your own generation, and for generations to come.

For the Christian, it isn't all that different. For us, we don't primarily look back to Abraham (though we do see him in the background), but to Christ, to his finished work. To his life, his ministry, his death, his resurrection, his ascension to the right hand of the Father. That's the great event that we look back on, that shapes who we are.

And we look forward to the fulfilment of Christ's promises. Again, Christ is building his church. God promised Abraham that all the earth would be blessed through Christ, we don't see that yet, we still look forward to that. Christ told us to make disciples of all nations, we haven't finished that yet. Revelation tells us that a great multitude from every tribe tongue and nation will be saved and will worship the king, we don't see that yet.

For the Christian, to dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness is to live with a certain connection to the past, what Christ has done, and how he has been building his church these past 2000 years. It's to live with a certain connection to the present, to see yourself as a part of that great company. And to live with a certain connection to the future, as one who labors in faith to see Christ's kingdom established little by little, one life at a time.

And we shouldn't be content to leave it as a kind of vague abstraction. As moderns we have a tendency to either be ignorant of history, or look at it with contempt, like we have no real

indebtedness to those who have come before us. To dwell in the land faithfully means to learn to see history as a stewardship to be passed on to the next generation.

As Christians, to dwell in the land we need to cultivate a certain humble curiosity about our own history. About the history of our nation, the history of our town, the history of our denomination and our church. And we need to learn to ask ourselves, what do I need to protect, what do I need to preserve, what do I need to improve, what do I need to build to pass this on to the coming generations?

And this doesn't need to be big flashy things. This can be as simple as raising your kids with a certain awareness and gratitude to those who have gone before us, to help equip them to enter into that history for themselves. And this means learning to expand your vision for parenting. Don't just think about how to shape your children into faithful teenagers, but think about what it will take to shape your children into faithful grandparents. What do you need to do for your kids now to set them up to be faithful grandparents in 50 years?

Don't just think about how you can build up the church for right now, but ask how you can help equip the church to be faithful for the next 200 years.

Maybe a more simple way to say it is this, "live in light of a bigger story." Live with a sense of inheritance of the past and a sense of stewardship for the future.

Ok, three quick application points from this section.

First, from verses 27-28, develop a sense of historic continuity. I covered that one already.

Second, from verse 30, use lawful means to change things. **"The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice."** Don't just sit on the sidelines, get involved. Dwelling in the land faithfully means bringing the Word of God to bear on the world around you.

Whatever role you have, operate within that role, but seek to influence for good. In your family, in our church, in your work, in our city, in politics. Use whatever mechanisms you have at your disposal to influence things towards godly wisdom, and towards biblical justice.

Then third, from verse 31, get your life in order. **“The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip.”**

If you’re going to be a faithful steward of the past, and an influence on the future for Christ, first you need to get your own house in order. This begins with God’s Word. Take it seriously. If you want to fight the decay of our culture, and build something for the future, that has to start with getting the law of God in your heart.

First, that starts with getting right with Jesus. You don’t write God’s law on your heart, God’s Spirit writes it there. So, getting your house in order has to start with getting right with Jesus. Turn to him in faith, turn from your sin in repentance. He writes his law on your heart. He shepherds you, he teaches you to walk without slipping.

Then second, you have to learn God’s law, both what it says, and how to live it. That’s only going to happen in real community. So, do what you have to do to take that next step. No one can live your life for you, you have to take responsibility. You have to have some initiative, you have to have some tenacity to put yourself in the right situation. Join the church, get into a gospel life group, find a mentor, come talk to me, come talk to Pastor Michael, come talk to one of the other elders. Find someone to help you really learn to know and live God’s word, but you have to have tenacity, you have to take responsibility. No one can do it for you.

To dwell faithfully means to develop a sense of historic continuity – of inheritance and stewardship – use lawful means to change things – towards God’s wisdom and God’s justice - and get your life in order.

## **PART 5: THREE COROLARIES (4-6)**

Ok, to move towards the end, we need to circle back to verse 4. Like I said before, this Psalm is pretty well wrapped up in verse 3. Verse 3 is the main point, verses 7 through 40 flesh this out, what does this look like?

But then, verses 4 through 6 are basically three tag-along ideas. Three important ideas to keep in mind along the way. We'll wrap up with these as basically three application points.

First, verse 4, **“delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.”**

Here's the first principle: *the godly life is the most satisfying life.*

David here is cutting against a common misconception, a common mistake. It's easy to hear this message – in light of the gospel, how should I live? Trust God, good works, duty – and basically come to the conclusion, “ok, I have to choose between a happy life and a dutiful life. I have to choose between doing what is satisfying to me, and what is pleasing to God. I can choose a life pleasing to God or a life pleasing to me. Got it.”

And that's just not true. Pleasing God is the first thing, but if we pursue that, then you'll also get your satisfaction thrown in too. If you delight yourself in the LORD, then he'll satisfy you in life.

Yes, this takes self-denial, and self-control. Yes, this takes learning some delayed gratification. But if you live God's way, you'll find satisfaction in life growing. If you live to please yourself, you'll find it more and more empty.

David touches on this again in verse 16. **“Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked.”**

Second, verse 5, **“Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.”**

Here’s the principle: *faith and hard work are not in tension, but mutually reinforcing.*

Another easy mistake someone could make with this message is to lean in on either the trust side, or the work side, and ignore the other.

In our flesh we tend to bounce back and forth between anxiously working hard at something without the confidence of faith on the one side, and on the other presuming on God’s kindness without the effort he requires of us in the normal means he’s given us.

We kind of bounce back and forth between faithless work, and presumption.

Whether we’re talking about our job, fighting sin, growing in godliness, working on your marriage, parenting your kids, or anything else. There is a way that God has laid out for us to work, and his blessing comes in the way of that work.

If you *seek him* you will find him, which means you need to study. If you put your sin to death, God will give you victory over sin.

Trusting God shouldn’t make you less hard-working in life, but more. And hard work, discipline, and persistence shouldn’t be seen as indicators of a lack of faith, but it’s presence.

Good works and faith are mutually exclusive when it comes to justification. Good works have no place in justification. But when it comes to faithful living, hard work and faith are the best of friends.

Colossians 3:23-24, **“<sup>23</sup>Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, <sup>24</sup>knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.”**

2 Thessalonians 3:10, **“If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.”**

Proverbs 3:6, **“In all your ways acknowledge him [trust], and he will make straight your paths [work].”**

Faith doesn't break the link between work and result, it makes it fruitful, it blesses it.

**Commit your way to the Lord** – work hard, do what he's set in front of you, be faithful to the task he's given you – **trust in him, and he will act** – you are not alone, he will help you.

Ok, third and last, verse 6, **“He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.”**

What he's talking about here is *vindication*. In the end, God will vindicate you, God will demonstrate that you are walking in the way of righteousness and wisdom.

A third common way that people can trip up on this kind of living for God is the simple fact that the world will think you're weird, or worse.

In a whole host of ways, the good life as described by the world and the good life as described by the church are getting further and further apart. This happens periodically throughout history.

How you think about dating, marriage, sex, kids, and parenting is going to look weird to the world, at best, if not repressive.

How you think about career, and leisure, and money, and whether or not you put pronouns in your email signature is going to look foolish to the world.

Even, how you think about the future, investing in hope in a brighter future, is going to look foolish to the world, that sees only doom and despair.

Christian, if you will walk in God's ways, one way or another, God will vindicate you. In this life, or at the day of judgement, he will vindicate you. He will take care to demonstrate that his ways are right, and his law is good. **He will bring forth your righteousness as the light.**

Matthew Henry, the great Puritan commentator, says this commenting on this verse, "Note, if we take care to keep a good conscience, we may leave it to God to take care of our good name."<sup>3</sup>

## CONCLUSION

What we're looking for is consistency. Does my life line up with what I believe? The gospel has a certain substance and a certain form. If we don't understand the substance of the gospel – the person and work of Christ, his truly divine nature, his true manhood, his mediating work of suffering and obeying on our behalf, grace, faith, repentance, forgiveness, adoption – if we don't understand the substance of the gospel, the form doesn't matter. The shape of the cup can't make up for the poison in the water.

But if we don't have a grasp of the biblical form of Christian living, we'll be more easily led astray by worldly ideologies that in the end will corrupt the gospel.

Given the gospel, given the saving, covenant love of God in Jesus Christ, how should we then live? **Trust God, do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.**

Trust God – he is good, he is just, he is wise, he is in control, even when we don't understand it.

Do good – his law, his justice, is our standard. Even when it is out of step with what the world is doing, or what looks advantageous for us in the moment, or what our own flesh wants.

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<sup>3</sup> Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. III, (Hendrickson), p. 302.

Dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness – you are the inheritor of a long history of God working out his will and purposes in history, in his church, and in this culture, receive that like a grateful son, a thankful daughter, and steward it for not just the next generation, but many generations to come.

**Trust God, do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.**