

Keep Calm and Cultivate On

Psalm 37

Sermon Handout

In an increasingly corrupt and frustrating world, the Christian is to calmly and patiently cultivate godly character and do the work of the kingdom.

“Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.”
supposedly Martin Luther

1. Fighting Frustration: Look In, Look Up, Look Long

“Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers!” Psalm 37:1 (ESV)

- **Look In: Be Aware that Frustration Metastasizes into Many Dangerous Sins**
 - Fret not yourself (37:1,37:7,37:8)
 - Be not envious (37:1,37:16)
 - Refrain from anger and forsake wrath! (37:8)
 - Turn from evil and do good (37:27)

"If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it." Genesis 4:7 (ESV)

- **Look Up: The answer to frustration is to look above it all to God the object of our hope and the satisfier of our souls.**

“An obsession with enemies and rivals cannot be simply switched off, but it can be ousted by a new focus of attention; note the preoccupation with the Lord himself, expressed in the four phrases that contain his name here. It includes a deliberate redirection of one’s emotions (4a, take delight; cf. Paul and Silas in prison, singing as well as praying), and an entrusting of one’s career (your way, 5) and reputation (your vindication, 6) to him.” Derek Kidner

- Trust in the Lord (v. 3)
 - Delight yourself in the Lord (v. 4)
 - Commit your way to the Lord (v. 5)
 - Be still before the Lord (v. 7)
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- **Look Long: Our frustration is with God’s timeline but in God’s time framework, justice is coming soon.**

- o They are quickly perishing (37:2)
- o They shall be cut off (37:9,22, 26,34)
- o In a little while, the wicked will be no more (37:10)
- o The Lord laughs when the wicked gnashes because God knows his day is coming (37:12-13).

"But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed." 2 Peter 3:8-10 (ESV)

2. Flourishing In Frustrating Times:

"Every age has had its darkness and its dangers. The task of the Christian is not to whine about the moment in which he or she lives but to understand its problems and respond appropriately to them."
Carl Trueman

- **Recalibrate Your Heart: Decide to Use Difficult and Unjust Experiences to Deepen Your Relationship With God.**

"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." Psalm 37:3-4 (ESV)

"Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places." Habakkuk 3:17-19 (ESV)

- **Resolve: Resolve to trust God with the Vindication of Your Life Instead of Yourself.**

"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." Psalm 37:5-6 (ESV)

- **Rest In the Lord: Choose To Hand Over Your frustrations to the Lord. Wait on the Lord.**

"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!" Psalm 37:7 (ESV)

- **Refuse: Refuse to be frustrated and miserable. Understand its danger to yourself and others.**

"Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! 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." Psalm 37:8-9 (ESV)

Times of frustration provide for the believer a great opportunity to examine and to recalibrate their relationship with Christ.

3. Fueling Your Faith With the Promises of God.

"Faith is being satisfied with all that God promises to be for you in the future. So faith is this joyful embracing. God has promised a great reward, and my faith says I substantially embrace it and feel it. I embrace it, and it is so satisfying to me that I deal with the injustice without bitterness. I'm not bottoming out with despair, I'm not bottoming out with anger, I'm not bottoming out with plotting revenge, and I'm not bottoming out with endless self-justifications."

John Piper

- **God promises to satisfy your desires.**

"Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."

- **God promises to vindicate your righteousness.**

"Commit your way to the Lord, trust in Him, and he will act. He will bring forth your righteousness as light, and your justice as the noonday."

- **God promises to keep his people from ultimate harm:**

"The steps of a man are established by the Lord when he delights in God's way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand."

- **God promises a future for the man of peace:** "There is a future for the man of peace but transgressors will be altogether destroyed." (vss. 37-38)

Study/Application Questions

1. **Psalm 37 begins by saying, "Fret not yourself because of evildoers."** What kinds of situations in our world—or in your own life—most tempt you to become frustrated, discouraged, or envious? Why do you think those situations affect you so deeply?
2. The sermon encouraged us to "**Look In**" because unchecked frustration can grow into anger, envy, bitterness, and other sins. Which of these responses do you find yourself most vulnerable to when you experience injustice, and how can recognizing it early help you fight against it?
3. David repeatedly calls us to **trust, delight, commit, and be still before the Lord** (Psalm 37:3-7). Which of these four commands is currently the most challenging for you? What would obeying that command look like in your present circumstances?
4. "**Look Long**" reminds us that God's timeline is different from ours and that He will ultimately bring justice. How does remembering God's eternal perspective change the way we respond to injustice that seems unresolved today? How does 2 Peter 3:8-10 reinforce this truth?
5. Carl Trueman says Christians should not merely complain about the times but respond faithfully to them. What are some practical ways believers can "cultivate" God's kingdom in the middle of a frustrating culture instead of simply criticizing it?
6. The sermon spoke about **recalibrating our hearts** by allowing difficult experiences to deepen our relationship with God. Can you share a season when hardship actually strengthened your faith? What did God teach you through that experience?
7. Psalm 37 calls us to **commit our way to the Lord and leave vindication in His hands**. Why is it so difficult to trust God with our reputation, our rights, or our desire to be proven right? What does it practically look like to surrender those things to Him?
8. The sermon concluded by emphasizing God's promises to satisfy, vindicate, uphold, and secure the future of His people. Which of these promises do you most need to believe this week? How can your group pray that you would live in light of that promise rather than being controlled by frustration?

These questions should lead naturally from observation of Psalm 37 into personal reflection and practical application, while reinforcing the sermon's central theme: **In a frustrating world, God's people are called to remain calm, cultivate godly character, and trust His promises rather than becoming consumed by anger or despair**