

# WEEK 8

## Do Not Fret

### *Psalm 37*

I'm going to do something I have never done before and will probably never do again – I am going to draw a point from a Marvel movie. One of the benefits of women's Bible study is that we generally get to avoid illustrations like this, but I just can't help myself. Now, if I ever use a sports analogy, THAT'S when you need to stage an intervention!

In late Spring of 2018, thousands upon thousands of Americans flocked to theaters to see *Avengers: Infinity War*. I was one of them. I was also one of thousands upon thousands of Americans who left the theater in a state of emotional turmoil. In case you didn't see it, here's my summary: After three hours of intense, heart-thumping, edge-of-your-seat action, the good guys die and the bad guy (who's the most disgusting creature imaginable) wins. Then he kills off half of the world's population. WORST. ENDING. EVER.

I was stunned. Horrified. The good guys are *SUPPOSED* to win! Sure, about half way through the movie there needs to be some suspense, something that makes us wonder if the hero will emerge victorious or not. But by the end, that should be resolved and we should all go home rejoicing that good has once again triumphed over evil. Duh! Doesn't everyone know this?!

After the movie my poor husband had to answer dozens of questions that went something like this: "Greg, the Avengers that died, they aren't *actually* dead, right? Like, they're dead, but not dead-dead?...Have you read the comic books this movie is based on? Can you tell me what happens?... Thanos has to die, right? He can't have all power and kill everyone and take over the world and that be the end of it, right?... Spiderman and Black Panther – what about them? They're still alive, aren't they?... The Avengers that are left, they'll join forces and save the world, right?... When does the next movie come out?... WHAT?!!!! I have to wait HOW LONG?!!!!"

April 26, 2019. That's the release date for the fourth and last movie – *Avengers: Endgame*. As of today, I have 8 weeks left to wait for a resolution. Eight weeks. That's not too bad.

As believers, we don't know how long we'll be waiting for the final installment of God's sovereign decree for the world. Only He knows when His "endgame" will come to pass. As of today, from

our very limited perspective, the good guys are losing. The enemy appears to have all power. The wicked prosper, while the ones who love Jesus suffer under the fierce onslaught of Satan's rage. As I scan newspaper headlines, I can't help but feel a little bit like I felt when the credits started to roll on Infinity Wars. "Really? Are you kidding me? Is this what it's come to? This CANNOT be happening!" But it is – it is happening.

So what do we, as the people of God, do as we wait for the "endgame"? How do we handle the injustice? How do we process the prosperity of the wicked? How do we respond when, at least for now, the bad guys are winning? How are we to think and live in a culture that is increasingly hostile toward everything we believe?

The answer, at least in part, is Psalm 37. We *study* and *believe* and *live out* Psalm 37. It's a Psalm for waiting people. Waiting, *suffering* people. People who are watching evil win and wondering what gives. It's a reminder for every single one of us that *this* – what we see right here, right now – is NOT the endgame. It's a reminder that God is working all things for His glory and the good of His people. To use the words of J.R.R. Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings*, it's a reminder that He will "make every sad thing come untrue."

"Do not fret...evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord will inherit the land...and will delight themselves and abundant prosperity...and will dwell in it forever" (Psalm 37: 8, 9, 11, 29)

BEST. ENDING. EVER.

## Day 1 - READ: What does it say?

- Read Psalm 37 in the Bible you most often use for study. Read it out loud if you can!
- Read Psalm 37 in one or two other translations. The YouVersion Bible app makes this very easy! Biblegateway.com is another free resource for accessing various Bible translations. The NIV, ESV, NASB, and the HCSB are my favorites. The Amplified Bible (AMP) translation is another good one to reference.
- If time permits, read a modern paraphrase of Psalm 37 such as *The Message*. You can access *The Message* for free on your YouVersion phone app or biblegateway.com.
- If possible, use the audio function of your YouVersion Bible app to *listen* to Psalm 37 being read in your favorite translation.

## Day 2 - OBSERVE: What do I see?

Mark up the text below as follows:

- Use a colored pencil or highlighter of your choosing to highlight or underline everything that relates to “the wicked”(also referred to as evildoers, wrongdoers, transgressors).
- Use a different colored pencil or highlighter to highlight or underline everything that relates to the righteous/the humble/those who wait on the Lord. Make a mental note of the massive contrast you just uncovered!
- Use any color you want to circle each occurrence of the words “the Lord.”
- Use any color you want to circle or underline any key words and/or phrases. Look for repetition. (Hint: you should definitely mark the phrase “do not fret!”)

*Do not fret because of evildoers,*

*Be not envious toward wrongdoers.*

*2 For they will wither quickly like the grass*

*And fade like the green herb.*

*3 Trust in the LORD and do good;*

*Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.*

*4 Delight yourself in the LORD;*

*And He will give you the desires of your heart.*

*5 Commit your way to the LORD,*

*Trust also in Him, and He will do it.*

*6 He will bring forth your righteousness as the light*

*And your judgment as the noonday.*

*7 Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him;*

*Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,*

*Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.*

*8 Cease from anger and forsake wrath;*

*Do not fret; it leads only to evildoing.*

*9 For evildoers will be cut off,*

*But those who wait for the LORD,*

*they will inherit the land.*

*10 Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more;*

*And you will look carefully for his place and he will not be there.*

*11 But the humble will inherit the land*

*And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.*

*12 The wicked plots against the righteous*

*And gnashes at him with his teeth.*

*13 The Lord laughs at him,*

*For He sees his day is coming.*

*14 The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow*

*To cast down the afflicted and the needy,*

*To slay those who are upright in conduct.*

*15 Their sword will enter their own heart,*

*And their bows will be broken.*

*16 Better is the little of the righteous*

*Than the abundance of many wicked.*

*17 For the arms of the wicked will be broken,*

*But the LORD sustains the righteous.*

*18 The LORD knows the days of the blameless,*

*And their inheritance will be forever.*

*19 They will not be ashamed in the time of evil,*

*And in the days of famine they will have abundance.*

*20 But the wicked will perish;*

*And the enemies of the LORD will be like the glory of the pastures,*

*They vanish -- like smoke they vanish away.*

*21 The wicked borrows and does not pay back,*

*But the righteous is gracious and gives.*

*22 For those blessed by Him will inherit the land,*

*But those cursed by Him will be cut off.*

*23 The steps of a man are established by the LORD,*

*And He delights in his way.*

*24 When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong,*

*Because the LORD is the One who holds his hand.*

*25 I have been young and now I am old,*

*Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken*

*Or his descendants begging bread.*

*26 All day long he is gracious and lends,*

*And his descendants are a blessing.*

*27 Depart from evil and do good,*

*So you will abide forever.*

*28 For the LORD loves justice*

*And does not forsake His godly ones;*

*They are preserved forever,*

*But the descendants of the wicked will be cut off.*

*29 The righteous will inherit the land*

*And dwell in it forever.*

*30 The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom,*

*And his tongue speaks justice.*

*31 The law of his God is in his heart;*

*His steps do not slip.*

*32 The wicked spies upon the righteous*

*And seeks to kill him.*

*33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand Or let him be condemned when he is judged.*

*34 Wait for the LORD and keep His way,*

*And He will exalt you to inherit the land;*

*When the wicked are cut off, you will see it.*

*35 I have seen a wicked, violent man*

*Spreading himself like a luxuriant tree in its native soil.*

*36 Then he passed away, and lo, he was no more;*

*I sought for him, but he could not be found.*

*37 Mark the blameless man, and behold the upright;*

*For the man of peace will have a posterity.*

*38 But transgressors will be altogether destroyed;*

*The posterity of the wicked will be cut off.*

*39 But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD;*

*He is their strength in time of trouble.*

*40 The LORD helps them and delivers them;*

*He delivers them from the wicked and saves them,*

*Because they take refuge in Him.*

## Day 3 - OBSERVE: What do I see? (cont'd.)

1) List the various actions/behaviors of the wicked described in the Psalm.

v. 7 – *prosper in his way, carries out wicked schemes*

v. 12 –

v. 14 –

v. 21 –

v. 32 –

2) List the various actions/behaviors of the righteous described in the Psalm.

v. 9 – *wait for the Lord*

v. 21 –

v. 26 –

v. 30 –

v. 31 –

3) What curses are pronounced on the wicked in the Psalm?

v. 2 – *wither quickly like grass, fade like the green herb*

v. 9 –

v. 10 –

v. 13 –

v. 15 –

v. 17 –

v. 20 –

v. 22 –

v. 28 –

v. 34 –

v. 36 –

v. 38 –

4) What blessings/promises are pronounced for the righteous in the Psalm?

v. 9 – *inherit the land*

v. 11 –

v. 17 –

v. 18 –

v. 19 –

v. 22 –

v. 23 –

v. 24 –

v. 25 –

v. 28 –

v. 29 –

v. 31 –

v. 33 –

v. 37 –

v. 39 –

v. 40 –

5) According to verses 3-8, how are God's people supposed to respond to these realities? (fill in the blanks)

"\_\_\_\_\_ in the LORD and do \_\_\_\_\_; Dwell in the land and \_\_\_\_\_ faithfulness. \_\_\_\_\_ yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart. \_\_\_\_\_ your way to the LORD, \_\_\_\_\_ also in Him, and He will do it. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noonday. \_\_\_\_\_ in the LORD and \_\_\_\_\_ for Him; Do \_\_\_\_\_ because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. Cease from \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ wrath; Do not fret; it leads only to evildoing."

## Day 4 - INTERPRET: What does it mean?

- 1) What appears to be the author's purpose in writing this Psalm?
- 2) You spent a LOT of time in days 2 and 3 pulling out the contrast between the righteous and the wicked. What conclusion(s) can you draw from this contrast? What's ultimately in store for each?
- 3) Why does the phrase "do not fret" appear multiple times?
- 4) Why is fear (specifically, fretting over the prosperity of the wicked) closely connected with anger and "evildoing" (v. 8)?
- 5) What do you think it means to "cultivate faithfulness?" (v. 3)
- 6) Verse 4 has been to victim of all sorts of abuse. "Love God and he'll give you that awesome house/car/job that your heart desires!" Hopefully by now you are able to discern that this is NOT what this verse promises. So let's break it down a bit:

What do you think it means to "delight yourself in the Lord?"

What impact do you think delighting in God has on your desires?

In light of this, what promise can we claim from this verse?

- 7) What do you learn about “waiting for” or “hoping in” the Lord from this Psalm?
- 8) If you had to summarize in one phrase the overall message of Psalm 37, what would it be?
- 9) Take a good look at how the Psalm ends (vv. 38- 40). What does this reveal about God?

## Day 5 - APPLY: How does it work?

- 1) The attributes of God most prominently featured in this Psalm are His faithfulness, His protection and provision, His love of justice, and His power to save and deliver His own. Choose one of these attributes and think through why and how it matters in your life today. Form it into the following prayer of thanksgiving:

God, thank you for being \_\_\_\_\_ because

---

---

- 2) In what particular area of life, or concerning what particular issue do you most need to heed the instruction, "DO NOT FRET"?
- 3) What can you know for sure about God's "endgame" and how should this impact the way you process news headlines and current events?
- 4) Spiritual growth consists of applying a little bit of truth to a little bit of life over the course of days, weeks, months, and years. What "little bit of truth" from this Psalm are you seeking to apply right now? In other words, what is your main take-away from your time spent marinating in Psalm 37 and how might it change to way you think/feel/act?