

James T. Jeremiah  
Pastors Conference Devotional Session  
September 16, 1981

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

The 37th psalm is a very practical psalm and I want to give you a little sidelight on how practical it can be. When I was a young preacher, that's 10 or 15 years ago, I started a library and I remember reading in the writings of Charles Haddon Spurgeon that he had a little verse in his Bible or in his books. So I had a little book plate printed and on the bottom of the book plate I had this reference typed out or printed out, psalm 37:21. The wicked borroweth and payeth not again. And you would be utterly amazed how many books have come back that probably otherwise would have permanently departed. They opened it up, saw the verse, got under conviction, and I got the book. So it's a very practical psalm.

James T. Jeremiah:

I want to read verses 23 and 24, and we'll pray and have our study today. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. Our father use thy word to encourage us today. As we think of the context of these verses in the psalm with the wicked and the ungodly and those who oppose the truth, we see in this a great encouragement for the man of God to take a stand and live as the light of the world in the midst of darkness. Help us as believers, help us as preachers, as servants of God, to realize how wonderful it is to be chosen of our Heavenly Father to serve in a land and a place as described in this psalm. In Jesus' name, amen.

James T. Jeremiah:

The Bible often refers to the man of God. It does so frequently in giving us the biographies of Elijah and Elisha. And here is a reference, though the word in the text that we want to think about is the word *good* is in italics, indicating perhaps that it's not in the text. The whole context describes the man of God, the steps of the man of God, or the steps of a good man, or the steps of a righteous man. In the new Testament language, I suppose we find the definition of a man of God in the phrase where we read that we are purchased by God, bought with a price, and in the same text, possessed by God, indwelt by the holy spirit. And as the consequence of all that, we are to be pleasing to God, the glorified God in our bodies. We are his. We are owned by him, possessed by him, that we might please him.

James T. Jeremiah:

And in this psalm, there are several wonderful descriptions of a man of God. I'm not going to take all of them, but let me give you a couple. For example, the word *the righteous* or a righteous man, this is almost like the Book of Proverbs, found eight times in this particular psalm. Verse 16. A righteous man, what he has is better than the riches of many wicked. Verse 17. The word *righteous* is used again, describing a man of God. Verse 21. The righteous showeth mercy and giveth. And verse 25. The righteous, [inaudible 00:03:44]. Verse 29. The righteous shall inherit the land. The righteous. The man of God. And I like to think that that applies to those of us here today, who are God's chosen servants to do his bidding in a world, described in psalm 37, as being a very wicked one.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now, in this particular verse that we read this morning, there are certain things said about the man of God. First of all, God has something to do in controlling the direction he goes. His direction. The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord. That is, they're established. If our hearts are fixed on God, as we

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read in psalm 112:7, we may be sure that he will establish, he will direct, he will order our ways. He will lead us. Now, sometimes it may appear to us that those of us who are affiliated with organizations where the local church and organizations related to the local church make the decisions and we decide individually, we might have a handicap because we don't have some superintendent or Bishop or somebody directing us. And I want to tell you something, friend, I'd rather have the Bishop of my soul doing the directing than having any man down here trying to do it.

James T. Jeremiah:

And though sometimes it may seem difficult and hard to face, in some circumstances, it's a great thing to know that the Bishop of our souls does the directing of our ways. He establishes our ways. And that, humanly speaking, is an impossibility because we can't do it ourselves. Jeremiah 10:23 says, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. And so apart from God, there is no real direction in the right way. And this matter of being directed by God is not an option. It's an imperative command. Psalm 119:133 says, order my steps in thy word and let not iniquity have dominion over me. Word of God reminds us too that the word of God is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. I like that. And let's say all of us, all of us, would like to be able to look out ahead and see what's coming down the way.

James T. Jeremiah:

God gives the details of our feet step by step. He gives the general outline of our path. In other words, he doesn't tell us today what's going to happen precisely 10 years from now, but he does tell us the word of God gives direction for the steps we take today and then outlines the future for us in generalities. So we don't have to worry about the future because the same light that directs us will continue to do so. And it's great to know that when we have direction from God, these directions are infallible. I like this because the Lord establishes the steps or he directs the steps. So this morning, one of the marks of a man of God, a righteous man, I take that verse seriously, and I do, is that God establishes his steps, his ways, he takes care of his direction. Good to know that. You may be going through some trials and wondering what's going to happen now, what am I going to do next? Well, you don't have to worry about too far next. If you just take it day by day, God will show you along the way. You've seen that, some of you better than I've ever known it.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, a man who is a man of God is not only directed by him, but he serves to be a great delight. Now, that may sound a little different because the great thing we believe is if we follow God and we are directed by him, then the delight comes to us. But that isn't what that verse says. The Lord delights in the way of the man whose steps he has made firm. The Lord delights in us. Isn't that wonderful? You mean in us? It's what it says. We follow his direction, he delights in the man or the woman who follows him. Psalm 147:11 says, the Lord taketh pleasure or favors those that fear him and those who hope in his mercy or those who wait for his loving kindness. The Lord the delights in the believer who is obedient in following the Lord's direction.

James T. Jeremiah:

Psalm 35:27. The Lord has pleasure or he delights in the prosperity or the wellbeing of his servant. You know what? I believe God is happy when we prosper. I believe he is happy when we prosper spiritually. I believe he's happy when we prosper financially. You think he is? I'm sure he is. God doesn't take any particular blessing in making us poor and we don't become any more spiritual because we are. Young

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lady came to our house several years ago with my daughter. She was a Catholic girl. And she said, "I'm a Catholic." She was scared to death to come to my home. She was Catholic. I said, "Well, that's fine. Glad to have you." And I called her by name. "I think you need to understand that I've taken the vows of poverty too." She said, "You have?" I said, "Yeah. It was not voluntary. I didn't do it willingly. But I've taken it." Somebody said, "You're a poor preacher." I know that. Do not tell me. Any way you measure it.

James T. Jeremiah:

I'll tell you something. We need to recognize that God is happy when his people are blessed. He delights in that. He doesn't look up in heaven, look down over the parapets of glory and see what he can do with a Baptist preacher and give him 15 deacons [inaudible 00:09:26] his back and two or three women are cussing him out and all that business. He's glad when things go well, isn't he? He delights, takes pleasure in that. Psalm 149:4. The Lord taketh pleasure in his people. Proverbs 11:20. The blameless in their walk are his delight. By the way, the primary prerequisite for a Bishop, a Pastor or an Elder is the first one. Blameless. No crack in his character. It means sinless. I've never found anybody who reached that stage. But blameless.

James T. Jeremiah:

Word of God talks about a danger here. Though he fall, though he stumble, he will not fall. I don't have to say it to this crowd because we all know it, but we never go out of the house and never stay in the house or go to bed or any place else without being in a battle. And we have three enemies to face; one around us, the world, one in us, the flesh, and one above us, the devil. And wherever we go, we have possibilities of falling. It's interesting to read the scriptures and see what happened to those who've fallen or stepped by the wayside, like Job. Job lost everything he had and when he got finished with it all though, he doubled his wealth. Somebody remarked the other day, he didn't get any more children because he didn't lose them. They were already in heaven. You don't lose what's in heaven, you know.

James T. Jeremiah:

Jonah cast in the sea and then delivered and had the second chance. How many of you believe in the second chance? Not talking about after you die, but I'm talking about now. I don't know where we'd be if he didn't give us the second chance, and I'm not going to start going beyond that because most of us had more than that. Jonah's an interesting character. He reminds me of the running Christian. Joseph found his way. A young lady who said to me one day last year, "Going through a lot of trial, and I don't know how it happened to me." I said, "You haven't been in jail yet, have you? You haven't been in jail yet for doing the right thing, have you?" "Well, no." I said, "Well, Joseph was, so when you get worse than Joseph, complain."

James T. Jeremiah:

Joseph went in prison. He fell down in that sense, but God delivered him. I think of Peter, [inaudible 00:11:56], and if you were dealing with Peter, I was dealing with Peter, we probably wouldn't let him preach on Pentecost. Probably won't let him preach at all. But God did. [inaudible 00:12:07], there's a danger brethren. Let's not plot ourselves as being capable of overcoming it in ourselves because we can't. I've lived too long and seen too many catastrophes not to be scared [inaudible 00:12:22]. I'll never be of the opinion it happened to him, boy, it can't happen to me. It can. Well, last of all, God delivered him, his deliverance. The Lord upholdeth him. The Lord is the one who holds his hand. Keeps on going. When he falls, he is held up.

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James T. Jeremiah:

Now, to go back to one of those old illustrations. I heard an interesting little story about kids. I like stories about children, not about you. But they teach me something. I have a little grandson said to me one day, "Where are you going, Grandpa?" "I don't know." "What do you want to do?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "If you don't know what you're going to do, you better not do it." Not bad for a five-year old philosopher. The little guy was like all little guys. He had a tendency for mud puddles. And his mother decided to dress him up and make him look nice for once. Got him all dressed up in a clean suit and started down the street with him. And he got away from her and he started walking along the curb and she said, "Now, Johnny, you be careful. You're going to fall and get all dirty." Oh, he wouldn't fall. So he went along the curb and finally he went [kaflop 00:13:41] right in a big old puddle of water. And here he is, lying on his back, looking up. His mother said, "Now, young man, what are you going to do?" You said, "I'm going to get up." Well, when the falling comes, may God help us to have the grace from heaven, the upholding power of almighty God, to get up and not quit, but keep on going, the marks of a man of God.