

James T. Jeremiah  
Devotional Session  
September 17, 1981

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, let's open our Bibles to the 37th Psalm. Let's pray together. Father we're glad we can rejoice, we can have a good time as Christians. We not only have all of that but we have something more meaningful. We have peace, we have the joy of the Lord and the blessing of God on our lives. We thank You for this, which comes only by the grace of God. We look in this Psalm and some of the scriptures this morning, and we pray to encourage us and challenge us to live for God. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

James T. Jeremiah:

Yesterday, the Brother Stowell[?] was talking about the society of the 1980s. If you want a description of what characterizes the 1980s, you will find some of it in Psalm 37. I am amazed as I've studied this Psalm, and yesterday again I went to the concordance, to look up a word to see how often it was found, and I was literally amazed to find that the word wicked is found in this Psalm, probably more than any chapter in the whole Bible. It is interesting in this, because you have the emphasis upon the wickedness of the opposition to righteousness unto the child of God, but all the way through it, there are left little things that help us as believers to see how we can live in a wicked age and have joy and victory in our lives.

James T. Jeremiah:

The interesting thing about that is that the first reference to the word wicked, as far as I can determine, is back in Genesis 18, where we read in verse 23, "And Abraham drew near and said, wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" And then in verse 25, "Be not far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked and then shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" What's he going to do? He's going to destroy the wicked and He's going to preserve the just.

James T. Jeremiah:

And if God would preserve a just man, like Lot, there's hope for those who have gone beyond that. God in his wonderful grace has put all of this together. The word is used 266 times in the Old Testament.

James T. Jeremiah:

One writer mentioned this about it, "Wicked people were guilty of violation of the social rights of others, or they were violent, oppressive, greedy, engaged in plotting and trapping poor people and quite willing to murder to gain their ends. In a word, they threatened the community. They were dishonest in business and the courtroom." And all through the Psalm you will find many references that I can't take time this morning to study with you, but for example, one of the things that says, "They plot against the just" verse 12 and 32, "They fight the poor and needy and the upright" in verse 14. "They carry out wicked schemes" in verse seven. But over and over again, the Psalmist comes back with this conclusion, "But they're doomed to destruction, doomed to destruction. Their end is coming." Now we live in a day like that. And you know, we've been thinking a little bit, talking a little bit about the home and the need for homes.

James T. Jeremiah:

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I want to say if I were a shouting Methodist, I could be a shouting Baptist, I would say amen to what we've been hearing, because this is where the problems are coming, but don't be surprised, because all of this, I think, is a fulfillment of prophecy. You want to find that, you just read the second and the third chapter of 2 Timothy, "Let's know also that in the last days, disastrous, dangerous, hazardous, difficult times will come." And then he goes on to describe all of these times. You're well aware of that. I don't need to read that for you, but the thing that really hit me one day, while I was reading this and studying it is where it will end.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well in verse six of this passage, "For of this sort are they which creep into households". And this wicked world described in Psalm 37 is out there knocking at the doors of our houses, of our churches and of our lives. We live in this kind of a place. Well, we need to be aware of that, but we shouldn't let that get us down for in this type of the Scripture, and I want to just quickly point out to you some of the things that the righteous have in this kind of a society. I'm glad God didn't put us somewhere where we didn't have this because somebody says, "Oh, it's so dark." Yeah, it is, but you don't turn a flashlight to look into the noonday sun, When the [inaudible 00:05:02] smog is gone.

James T. Jeremiah:

Yeah, we're light when it's dark, and God says, "We're the light of the world." And the light shines the brighter when it's the darkest. Those of us who are his people, children of God, have hope. Let's look at verse 15... Verse 18. "The Lord knoweth the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever." Their inheritance shall be forever more. They will endure forever. We don't live in a hopeless world without hope. Verse nine we're told to wait upon the Lord, in verse 11, the meek are to be submissive to him, verse 29, where the righteous or the just are made right with God. Verse 34 tells us we've been exalted by the Lord. We have hope. The meek shall inherit the earth. Over and over again, by the way, in this Psalm, as I think I mentioned the other day, it talks about inheriting the earth.

James T. Jeremiah:

All things are ours. Christ is God... We're his. We belong to him. We read this in First Corinthians three 21 and 23. In 1 Corinthians 6, it's very interesting that in this letter that's written to that carnal church, that God gives this encouraging word to these people. He said, "We're going to judge the world. We're going to judge the angels. We're going to inherit the earth. We have hope." That is so brothers, and sisters in Christ. Verse 19, we have a sense of satisfaction. "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time. And in the days of famine, they shall be satisfied in times of disaster." One translation puts it, "They will not wither in days of famine." They will enjoy plenty, be satisfied and really have a peace in the midst of it all. Satisfaction. I believe God provides for us materially.

James T. Jeremiah:

I remember, I think some of you heard me tell the story of our early days as a pastor. We would pastor the church, we got \$11.50 a week, and I improved so much, they gave me a \$12.50 the next year. You can't beat that for inflation. And I remember sitting down at the table many times with not much to eat, we never went hungry. And I remember one day looking out at the beautiful banquet we had and all we had was potatoes, all that was there. So I looked at the potatoes and I looked at my wife and I said, "You pray." And she began to laugh. She said, "When we have hamburger, you pray" I said, "What in the

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world does that have to do with me?" I'll tell you what. I came to this school in 1954, and for six weeks, there was no salary, no money.

James T. Jeremiah:

You know what God did? I had an interesting thing happen as a young preacher. Our oldest daughter was born on the very day my car payment came through, and I always remind her on her birthday, I said, "Well, I paid the car payments." She's 40... I don't know 44, 43, and that day when we didn't have any money for the first and only time in our lives, we paid two car payments at the same time. God takes care of us. And you say, you fellows who live in high on the hog, you have all the money. All of us have enough and God takes care of it. And I'm glad that's so. In the midst of a godless day, we have a God who satisfies his people.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, let's look at verses 30 and 31. He gives his people stability in such an hour. "The mouth of the righteous, speaketh wisdom and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart. None of his steps shall slide." He's a clear testimony, mouth speak of wisdom. He has an honest heart. His tongue speaks that which is right. He has a good spiritual life. The law of the Lord is in his heart. He has a consistent walk. His feet do not slip. Stability.

James T. Jeremiah:

God can give stability in a day like this. Thank God he does and wants to do it. Verse 37 we have another characteristic of the righteous in a godless world. Verse 37 says, "Mark the perfect man." If your name is Mark, let's just see what you are. You're a perfect man. Well, in the sense of the spiritual, you're a perfect man if your name isn't Mark, because you have a holy standing with the Lord. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

James T. Jeremiah:

And I think the New International version of this translates it like this, "There is a future for the man of peace." I like that. There is a future for a man of peace. The meek shall enjoy great peace we're told in verse 11. Somebody has said man's failure to set and achieve goals is one of the major causes of his inability to have peace for himself, maybe his soul, I don't know, but the child of God can have peace. Verse 39 to 40, it talks about strength. "The Lord delivers them from the wicked." Verse 17, "The power of the wicked shall be broken." "We have overcome" we're told in 1 John 2:13-14. In Hebrews 2:14, "The very enemy of our soul has been defeated."

James T. Jeremiah:

I heard stories about a woman who came to a laundromat with three kids and the whole crowd in that laundromat crowded, and they were distressed with what was going on. These kids were running up and down the place, jumping on the baskets and getting on the machines, and when they left... When the woman left, she said, "I am so glad to be here. The most peaceful place I've found yet." Peaceful for her maybe, but not everybody else. And the storyteller refers to the three kids in this fashion, one of them they called quick running Tommy, and the other one was stop hitting your sister, Joseph. The other was called Mary stop crying. You've heard of the kid, I guess, who didn't know what his name was until after he was seven. He thought his name was shut up until that time.

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James T. Jeremiah:

There are all kinds of distressing things in the world, but you know the Lord Jesus said, "In the world, you shall have tribulation", but connect that in John 16:33, "In the world, within me... In me you shall have peace." The will of God in this world is tribulation, but the will of God also is peace. Glad for that. And the reason for it all is he's given us his word. He said, "I have spoken unto you the strength and comfort and the encouragement in such a time as this comes from no other source, than this book, the words of Christ." And then to know that we know the overcomer, because his work is very clearly defined.

James T. Jeremiah:

I have overcome the world. So when you think... Back to your place of service and finding the opposition that is there, and sometimes too much of that outside world has crept inside, and many of the things that happen in churches come about by worldly principles and practices and goals and ambitions, [inaudible 00:12:47] who thinks he runs the place and a lot of other things, remember that we've got a God who still runs the business. I'm glad of that.

James T. Jeremiah:

One of the great things that I learned as a young Christian... When I was unsaved, I had no interest in history. Fact of the matter is, the only thing I remember in history that was any value, is I'd go to class and we'd... You could tell by the glint in the teacher's eye that we're going to have a test, and this old lady had traveled all over the world. And when we saw that glint coming, we would say to her, "What about Napoleon? What about Bismarck? Tell us something that you saw in Versailles." She was off to the races, and she forgot completely she was going to give a quiz. I submit to you, that's a valuable lesson, but I got to say, I learned something that thrilled my soul. God doesn't separate the events from history and isolate them. He puts them all together and his hand is in it and he's running the business. Thank God we have a God who does that in the midst of all that's going around. He's still on the throne. Still sovereign. Still running things. Aren't you glad, you know a God like that?