

Never Fails!
Psalm 37:3-9
Dr. Paul Cannings

A. Cultivate Faithfulness (vs. 3-5):

1. Trust – Because God is faithful, we can live with confident expectations rather than constant anxiety.

a) This psalm is related to the Wisdom literature by its distinctively didactic character. The major problem for the psalmist is the inconsistency connected with the prosperity of the wicked. Although tempted to doubt God's goodness, the author quiets his mind and his hearers' by appealing to patience and trust. The organization is alphabetic, similar in many ways to the acrostic in Psalms 9 and 10.

2. Trust—Because of God's loving-kindness, we must live with a sense of security that God is always in control and has our backs.

a) The meaning is, "Cast thyself and thy life unreservedly upon God—yield thyself wholly to him—look to him for support and guidance." Trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. "He will accomplish all that thy faith has laid upon Him."

3. Lord—He has a covenanted, lasting relationship with us and promises never to leave us or forsake us and that no one can snatch us out of His or God's hands (Luke 12:22-34; Matthew 28:20; John 10:27-30).

4. Do good - Put a lot of effort into doing things that benefit your life and those around you.

5. Do good – We must focus on working while it is day (John 9:4) so that what we do for Christ brings Him glory (Colossians 3:17) and lasts forever (1 Corinthians 15:58).
6. Dwell – The Lord commands us to value where He plants us and not quickly look for greener pastures. Tough times are growth experiences (James 1:2-4).
7. Cultivate faithfulness – Care about what you have and remain steadfast in developing it.
8. Cultivate faithfulness—We should become so passionate about our Lord that we commit to live by faith and not by sight (1 Corinthians 5:7). Whether our circumstances change or not, our commitment should lead us to His Word so that it becomes a “light unto our feet and a light unto our path” (Psalm 119:105).
9. Delight yourself - In the midst of adversity, let serving God become your passion.

a) Poor Israelites, driven from their homes by the powerful, were tempted to seek their fortunes in foreign lands. Thereby, they would forfeit their national and religious privileges. To “delight” in the Lord is to take pleasure in His service and enjoy His fellowship. For example, “delight” in the Lord shall be rewarded with their heart’s desire, i.e., they will draw ever closer to their God.

10. Delight yourself – Amid adversity, don’t allow anyone or anything to cause you not to celebrate God (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

a) The word “delight” (37:4) speaks of “exquisite” joy. When believers delight in the Lord, his desires become their desires. Then their prayers are answered as they do his will. [\[1\]](#)

11. Delight – When we are in the midst of pain or discouragement, we demonstrate our trust in the Lord by worshipping Him and serving Him with gladness (Psalm 34).

12. In the Lord— He is faithful, everlasting, righteous, and holy and loves us by the blood of His only Son, so REJOICE!!

13. Give you the desires of our hearts – We can celebrate Christ because we can live expecting God to respond to our petitions – GOD IS FAITHFUL!! (Psalm 34:1-4, 7-9).

14. Give you the desires of our hearts—When our worship is sincere, the Lord, who is always in control because He has all power and authority, permanently establishes what our deepest innermost feelings desire.

15. Give you the desires of our hearts – Our will becomes His will, so we live blessed (Philippians 4:8-9).

16. Commit your way to the Lord - In the midst of wickedness and evil, we easily lose our eagerness for God. David commands us to surrender our lives to Him without reservation, willing and ready to do whatever He says.

a) The advice *Commit your way to the Lord* translates the verb “to roll” (see 22:8); it means to turn over to the Lord your whole life—all your desires, problems, anxieties. Let the Lord determine what your life is to be; *trust in him* (see comments on 4.5b and 13.5. *He will act* translates “he will do (it)”—that is, he will take action, he will do whatever is necessary (FRCL), “*he will help you*” (TEV).^[2]

17. Commit your way to the Lord – Turn your whole life or lifestyle over to God – your passions, problems, anxieties, and ambitions so that nothing interferes with our unhesitant reservation to do what He tells us to do.

a) To commit your way means “to roll it over on” the Lord.

18. Trust also in Him—We are commanded not to let our emotions stop us from relying on God’s Word, which does not return void (Isaiah 55:11). Instead, they should reinforce our need to put our confident hope in Christ.

a) The second proverb contains a contrast to the first, advocating not envy of the wicked, but *trust* in the Lord (cf. Ps. 4:6). Whereas the wicked live for themselves and by themselves, the righteous trust in God and receive from God their legitimate desires.^[3]

B. He Has Your Back (vs. 5b – 7a):

1. He will do it – If necessary, God will create a way out of no way to protect and bless us despite the circumstances we encounter (Romans 8:26-39).

a) Afflictions which are now the portion of the godly (2 Tim. 3:12) seem to cast a slur on their righteousness; but in “the manifestation of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:19) the Lord will judge—*i. e.*, vindicate the justice of their cause, as He did typically in the case of Job at the last (Job 11:17; Isa. 58:8; Mic. 7:9). So Christ, the Head of the Church, after having been forsaken of God, as though His righteous cause was lost, whilst He hung amidst darkness on the cross, was “justified” (*i. e.*, had His righteousness vindicated) at His resurrection and ascension (Rom. 1:3, 4; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 3:18).^[4]

2. He will bring forth – God is completely committed to not allowing our character or reputation to be tarnished by all that is taking place around us.

a) The believer should transfer all anxiety about life to the Lord “and he [emphatic] will do it,” *i.e.*, the Lord will take care of the situation. Whereas the just cause of the psalmist has been hidden, Yahweh would make it shine forth like the sun rising out of the darkness of the night. The rightness of his cause will become as clear as the full light of the noonday.^[5]

3. Righteousness as light – God will expose to everyone that our ways are His ways because we trusted in His word, ‘cultivated faithfulness,’ and continually demonstrated our commitment to delight ourselves in worshipping and serving Him despite of.

a) The conviction expressed in v 6 is that setbacks are temporary, like clouds obscuring the sun, but that eventually God will move the clouds away to let the true light appear.^[6]

4. Righteousness as light – God will testify that He is with you by the way He blesses you.

a) Everything considered, it seems that the latter interpretation is to be preferred. God will plainly and publicly demonstrate the justice of the psalmist's cause and prove him to be innocent. So a translation can be "He will clearly prove that you are innocent, he will show that your cause is just."^[7]

5. Righteousness as light – Your committed lifestyle will provide life and happiness (Psalm 112).

a) God will not frown on thee always; one day he will turn on thee the light of his countenance, and make thy righteousness to shine forth like the sun in its noonday splendor.^[8]

6. Judgment as the noonday—God will plainly and publicly demonstrate the justice of the psalmist's cause and prove him innocent.

7. Judgment as the noonday – God will demonstrate before everyone that our causes fit within His Word.

8. Rest in the Lord – Rest – In the midst of adversity, be still, don't fight for yourself (Romans 8:31) because He is Lord, is just, and His lovingkindness is new every morning and great is His faithfulness (Lamentations 3:21-26).

9. Wait patiently – Remain faithful while maintaining confident hope in God because He will fight for us (Isaiah 40:27-31; 1 Peter 3:8-17; Joseph in jail for twelve years waiting on the Lord).

a) This strophe essentially repeats the thought of verse 1; the advice is to wait patiently for Yahweh to act; the success and prosperity of the evil will soon be ended. Yahweh is the one to decide how and when wicked people will be punished, people who now “*prosper*” and “*succeed in their evil plans*” (TEV). *Be still before the Lord* means to be quiet in the Lord’s presence and not be constantly and impatiently complaining about the success of the wicked. The command *Be still before the Lord* in the TEV sense of “*Be patient*” is often expressed idiomatically; for example, “Don’t cause noise in the heart,” “Walk softly,” or “Sit coolly.”^[9]

C. Do Not Fret....He Never Fails (7b-9):

1. Don’t fret, become angry or full of wrath – We must not allow what people do to ignite sinful anger in us.

a) If men will dwell unduly on the fact of the prosperity of the wicked, and brood upon it in their hearts, they will be apt, in the first instance, to envy the wicked, which is at once “to do evil;” and from this they will be naturally tempted to go on to an imitation of their wicked practices, which is to assimilate themselves altogether to the enemies of God, and to be guilty of practical apostasy (comp. Ps. 73:2, “But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”).^[10]

b) This anger is what most of us would call “righteous indignation.” It is clearly anger directed at the right thing—wicked wrongdoing. But here anger is linked with the repeated concept of “fret.” This is no sudden surge of anger that passes away. This is a smoldering anger, a hostile resentment that we nurture and in time dominates our attitude toward wrongdoers. This is the anger we must release, to replace with a perspective shaped by a quiet trust in God.^[11]

2. Don't fret, become angry or full of wrath – Don't allow what people do to us to cause us to lose sleep because we constantly rehearse the issues in our mind.

a) If men will dwell unduly on the fact of the prosperity of the wicked, and brood upon it in their hearts, they will be apt, in the first instance, to envy the wicked, which is at once “to do evil;” and from this they will be naturally tempted to go on to an imitation of their wicked practices, which is to assimilate themselves altogether to the enemies of God, and to be guilty of practical apostasy (comp. Ps. 73:2)

b) So David, by waiting upon the Lord, instead of avenging himself on Saul, was promoted to the kingdom at Saul's death. [¹²¹]

3. Him who prospers in – Do not become upset over the person who does accomplish successful plans or how their way of life encompasses many accomplishments.

4. Who carries out wicked schemes - There is no need to fret over the person who deceitfully, deliberately plans to hurt others with no respect for God.

5. Cease from anger – David, who killed Goliath, commands us not to allow these wicked individuals to stress us out so that we become highly emotional and even quick-tempered.

a) (37:8–9) The type of “anger” against which this warning is issued is almost certainly “anger against God;” it arises from the experience of trouble in a world where the wicked are trouble-free, and as a consequence, all of the human experience seems to be grossly unfair. Again, patience is required, partly because such anger is futile, bringing only grief, and partly because the evil will eventually be cut off (as the Canaanites were before them). The faithful will eventually inherit the land (as their predecessors did).

6. Forsake wrath – We are commanded to put aside all emotions that drive us to physical altercations.

7. Do not fret – Do not continuously punish our hearts with anxiety or stressful thoughts that may arise from dealing with evil people who hurt others and have no respect for God.

a) The thought is that they will suffer the same fate as that of the original inhabitants of Canaan, who were removed from their land either by being killed in battle or else by being put to flight by the invading Israelites.

b) The promise is that they will continue to live safely and in prosperity in Canaan, the Promised Land.

8. Evil doers will be cut off – Those who have devised evil schemes will continuously be destroyed by God. This is a promise from God.

a) One should not be envious of sinful people and their prosperity (cf. vv. 7-8; cf. Prov. 23:17; 24:1) because they will wither like the grass (cf. Pss. 90:5; 102:4, 11; 103:15-16; Isa. 40:6-8; 1 Peter 1:24) and will soon die (Ps. 37:1-2). Instead one should trust in the LORD, who can answer prayers of the heart (vv. 3-4). The promise He will give you the desires of your heart is based on the condition: delight yourself in the LORD. One who delights in Him will have righteous desires. If a person trusts the LORD (cf. v. 3), God will gloriously vindicate him (vv. 5-6).

c) The verb may mean to be put to death, destroyed, or driven out of the land. The thought is that they will suffer the same fate as that of the original inhabitants of Canaan, who were removed from their land either by being killed in battle or else by being put to flight by the invading Israelites.

9. Those who wait on the Lord shall inherit the land—Those believers who steadfastly endure because they willfully choose to have confident hope in God's promises will experience the blessings that God has in store for them. These blessings are established generation after generation (Psalm 112:1-3).

a) The promise is that they will continue to live safely and in prosperity in Canaan, the Promised Land. Nothing certain can be inferred from this statement as to the time the psalm was written. It seems probable that this was a conventional way of saying that they would continue to be blessed and protected by the Lord in the land of Israel. The expression *possess the land* may be rendered more explicitly as “possess the land the Lord has promised.”^[13]

^[1] Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary*. The Tyndale reference library (213). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^[2] Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991). *A translator's handbook on the book of Psalms*. UBS Handbook Series (351). New York: United Bible Societies.

^[3] Craigie, P. C. (1983). *Psalms 1–50* (Vol. 19, p. 297). Word, Incorporated.

^[4] Fausset, A. R. (n.d.). *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Job–Isaiah: Vol. III* (p. 179). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

^[5] Smith, J. E. (1996). *The wisdom literature and Psalms*. Old Testament Survey Series (Ps 37). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.

^[6] Craigie, P. C. (1983). *Psalms 1–50* (Vol. 19, p. 297). Word, Incorporated.

^[7] Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991). *A translator's handbook on the book of Psalms*. UBS Handbook Series (351). New York: United Bible Societies.

^[8] *Psalms Vol. I*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (285). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

^[9] Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991). *A translator's handbook on the book of Psalms*. UBS Handbook Series (352). New York: United Bible Societies.

^[10] Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). *Psalms* (Vol. 1, p. 286). Funk & Wagnalls Company.

^[11] Richards, L. O. (1991). *The Bible reader's companion* (electronic ed., p. 359). Victor Books.

^[12] Fausset, A. R. (n.d.). [*A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Job–Isaiah: Vol. III*](#) (pp. 179–180). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

^[13] Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991). *A translator's handbook on the book of Psalms*. UBS Handbook Series (352–353). New York: United Bible Societies.