

1. Of all the lessons I have written in a good while, this one wins the award for being the most personal. This lesson draws upon recent events in my life that tie well to this lesson. To put it another way, I am sure it is not a coincidence that God had me write this lesson at this time.
 - a) When I wrote this lesson, I just returned from an annual family vacation that I take with my siblings, my mom and all her grandchildren. I have come to realize in the last few days just how much God has separated me from my siblings. I am not saying I am a superior to any of them. I have just come to realize how much God has separated me from my siblings for the purpose of drawing me closer to Him. For that I have given gratitude to Him and hopefully will continue to for a long time.
 - b) I have found that many a Christian like myself is considered the "religious one" in family. It is not so much anything I say, it is just that at times I am treated differently. If that is you too, well, welcome to the club. ☺
 - c) I have also come to realize over the years as a devout Christian just how difficult it is to be a witness to one's own (greater) family. Like most Christians, in many ways, I am much more comfortable around my Christian friends than I am around my relatives. I still care greatly for my relatives and want to see them saved. Again, the issue revolves around the realization how just how much God has separated me from them.
2. OK John, that is interesting. What does any of it have to do with this lesson?
 - a) This lesson continues the issue from the last lesson of David dealing with nonbelievers. In this psalm, David discusses and struggles with why many nonbelievers do well in life and appear to receive many more blessings in this lifetime than those who trust in God. The question is why does God not give great material things to those who trust in Him and at the same time, why do those who don't trust in God get lots of "stuff" in this life?
 - b) The easy thing is to just say, "Woe is me, I don't have it as good as others." What is harder to do is to see nonbelievers as people who are going down the wrong path in life.
 - i) We need to see nonbelievers as people who need Jesus in their lives.
 - c) With that said, this lesson focuses heavily on the life of the nonbeliever. I don't want us to just think about "strangers" who are doing financially well. I want us to think about those who are close to us who are quite content to live out their lives without trusting in Jesus for their salvation. The underlying issue is our relationship with nonbelievers.
 - i) Such unbelievers may or may not have great blessings in this lifetime. The important question is, what do we Christians do about such people?
 - ii) This reminds me, that in effect is the title of this lesson: It is, "What do we do with nonbelievers who are around us in our lives?" As you read through this lesson, a good question to consider is, "What am I doing with the nonbeliever around me?"
 - iii) What I don't want is for any of us is to just think, "Woe is them, they think they have it good, but they don't realize the danger of the path they have chosen."
 - iv) What I do want us to see is in effect, "We as believers may not have all the material things that others have. However, we are far more blessed than others because we can draw close to God and have an intense personal relationship with Him. That is far greater than any an all material things one can acquire in this lifetime."
 - v) In summary, I find the key point of this lesson is to realize just how much more blessed we are than the nonbelievers around us as we can draw close to God. At the same time, we should never act superior to the nonbelievers around us.
 - vi) What God wants is for us as believers to be a good witness to those around us who don't trust in Him and that is a purpose of this lesson.

3. I've noticed over my years as a believer how frustrating it is to be around nonbelievers for a significant period of time. That is what I deal with in my annual family vacations. It frustrates me that most of my greater family does not care that much about their relationship with God. I find that I can't really open up to them about aspects of my life because I know that they cannot relate to the issues I deal with in my relationship with God.
 - a) I guess the question comes down to, "What do we do when we are around such people?" Do we just do "small talk"? (That is, talk about unimportant things and avoid such major issues as our salvation.) That is what I find myself doing when I am in such settings.
 - b) I understand that God wants me to be a good witness to all people. I also understand the difficulty in reaching out to people who know me well, but at the same time, have no interest in my faith and trust in Jesus as my savior. I know what it is like to be talked down to, for holding the views that I hold.
 - c) I find myself wishing for a magic pill that makes my relatives "get it". I wish there was something I could do or say that would get those around me who don't believe in Jesus to see how they are wasting their lives on things that don't matter.
 - i) The truth is, there is no magic pill or the right set of words to make others see God. One has to remember that just as God has drawn us toward Him, so we have to be dependant upon God to draw others to Him. Sometimes God uses us to reach people around us and sometimes we have to let God work through others to draw those we love closer to Him.
 - ii) When there is nothing we can do for those we love but have no interest in the God, all we can do is continue to be a good witness for Him. All we can do is let God's love shine through us and let others see that love. I am aware that it is difficult at times, especially when nonbelievers around us don't care for God in the same way that you and I as believers in Jesus trust in Him daily.
 - d) Since I have no great solution to my dealings with nonbelievers, let me actually start Psalm 37 and show how it ties to my lesson theme of dealing with nonbelievers.
4. Psalm 37, introduction: Of David.
 - a) We only have this two-word title (in English) of this psalm. All it says in effect is David wrote it. Other than giving David credit, why is this title included?
 - b) I suspect the reason it is here ties to the last psalm we read. David is also the author of the previous psalm dealing with nonbelievers. The reason Psalm 37 follows Psalm 36 is not because this psalm was randomly placed next in order. This psalm continues a theme started in the last psalm that deals with our relationship with nonbelievers.
 - c) The last psalm focused on what is the fate of nonbelievers. This psalm continues that theme and asks the question, "Why does God allow the material prosperity of nonbelievers and at the same time allows believers to suffer?"
 - i) The underlying purpose is to understand the ultimate fate of both believers and nonbelievers and more importantly, what should we as believers do in our contact with nonbelievers? How should we be a good witness to them?
 - d) I think a point of this psalm is since we as believers can't offer material prosperity to nonbelievers, how do we "sell" Christianity to others? Since nonbelievers (by definition) have no interest in God, how do we get them to see the futility of the life they have chosen? That is the question I wrestle with and the question we will see David wrestle with in this lesson.
 - e) Later in this psalm, David says in effect that, "I was young, but now I am old" (Verse 25). That bit of information does not reveal when David wrote this other than it was later in his life. I have found it does help to be a Christian for a good while to see the truths that David teaches about the lives of believers and nonbelievers as described in this psalm.

5. Verse 1: Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; ² for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.
 - a) Let me paraphrase these two verses: Don't worry about those people who don't trust in God. They may be successful at this time, but soon enough, they will die.
 - b) The most important concept to get out of these two verses is the phrase "Do not fret". I checked a few other translations, and they open with essentially the same idea.
 - i) Don't worry about those in power who are bent on evil. Don't worry about those who are successful in life but don't care about God. Such people may be powerful or successful now, but in effect, "that is all they will ever get".
 - ii) One has to think about the length of eternity versus the length of this lifetime. Then say, am I primarily interested in my well being for eternity or my well being in this lifetime? The interesting thing is that if we primarily focus on the eternal, we will find that this lifetime gets blessed as well.
 - c) Let me discuss the "evil" of these opening two verses another way: Do these verses mean we should just "take it" when evil people are in charge? Of course not. If we have opportunities to vote them out of office or overthrow the evil that we do, we should.
 - i) At the same time, we shouldn't worry about their success. That is a point of these verses. We simply have to remember that their success (in comparison to eternity) lasts as long as a green plant lives.
6. Verse 3: Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. ⁴ Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. ⁵ Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:
 - a) Notice the first word of each of these three verses. It is "trust, delight and commit". All three of those "command verbs" are focusing on our relationship with God.
 - b) A key point of these verses is that we can't fix the evils of this world. All we can do is focus on our lives on God. These verses command us to turn to God and then He promises us blessings in this lifetime.
 - c) These two verses teach another principal as well: Once we commit our lives to serving God, He somehow makes it so that the pleasures we do have in life come from Him.
 - i) Notice the last part of Verse 4 says, "He will give you the desires of your heart."
 - ii) OK, how does God give us the desires of our heart? The short answer is God gives us the desire to do certain things and makes it possible for us to do those things.
 - a) For example, I love to write about God. Therefore, He gave me the opportunity for this ministry in order to bless Him and bless others.
 - b) We may love to travel and visit different cultures. I find that those who enjoy travel and trust in God somehow get the time and resources to travel.
 - c) You may have a love of cars. God then puts the desire in our hearts to work on them and be a minister for him through one's love of cars.
 - d) The examples are endless. The point is if we have a desire for something, often we can look to God to use those desires to make a difference for Him.
 - e) What about sinful desires? We all have them and have to fight them. I am not talking about such desires here. I am talking about the desires just to do "things", and to realize that God wants us to use those desires.
 - d) Verse 5, is an incomplete thought. The fact it ends (in this translation) in a semi-colon is to say in effect, "Commit to God and He will do what "Verse 6" says. I included this verse with Verses 3 and 4 as I wanted to show the "trust, delight and commit" combination.
 - e) If we are willing to trust in God, delight in His desires for our lives and be willing to commit our lives to Him, then He does give us the desires of our heart and "Verse 6".
 - i) With that said, let's actually move on and see what Verse 6 says:

7. Verse 6: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.
- a) Reading Verse 6 out of context, it sounds egotistical. It is describing "our righteousness". Even if we take this verse in context of Verse 3-5, it still sounds like we are something special. The point of this verse is not that we are superior to other people.
 - b) The key word is "radiance". We reflect what we "are". If we are reflecting God's love, then we can't help but "shine like the dawn" or the "noonday sun" as this verse states.
 - i) This verse is not meant to be taken literally. We do not literally glow.
 - ii) This verse is describing God as "light" and we are reflecting that light.
 - iii) Let me explain this verse another way: Most of us know the expression, "we are what we eat". The same is true based on what we worship or follow. If we are primarily focused say, on making money or acquiring things, we become "like that" in that we are shallow and are always focusing on the next "thing". However, if our primary focus is on being pleasing to the God of the bible, we can't help but reflect that attitude and it becomes noticeable in our lives.
8. Verse 7: Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. ⁸ Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret--it leads only to evil.
- a) In case you forgot, this psalm focuses on the lives of evil people and our relationship with those who don't trust in God. These verses say in effect, "Don't repay evil with evil". We can't "outdo" those who turn from God.
 - b) Let me ask this question: Have you ever tried arguing with those who don't believe in God? Has putting someone down ever lead anyone to Christ? Have you ever tried to show someone the error of their ways and all it did was make them angrier? If the answer is yes, then you have learned the "hard way" just as I have.
 - i) My point is we can't argue anyone into heaven. All we can do and all we should do around such people is let God's love shine through us.
 - ii) People who disagree with our views about Jesus can nitpick us to death about why they don't follow Jesus or care for the Christian lifestyle.
 - iii) However, what they can't do is argue with love. If we are kind to people who are mean to us, they can't fight that. There is a saying that the only thing the demons of hell cannot combat is pure love. If we show love to those who are "hating" toward us, that is what God desires and that is what these verses teach.
 - c) Getting back to the text, Verse 7 says to "wait patiently for him (God)". So does that mean we just allow evil to overrun our lives and wait for God to deal with it? No. Does it mean that we avoid arguing with people we disagree with about, say politics? No.
 - i) There is no single perfect answer here. Sometimes there is evil in society and good people need to rise up to fight it. The point of these verses is not about our timing in combating evil. (If you think of David's life, he never hesitated to fight against those who opposed God's will for David's society.)
 - ii) The point is our attitude. If we "sink to the level of nonbelievers" in order to combat them, we become no better than them. If we let God's light shine through us to make a difference for Him, then we cannot lose.
 - d) So how do you do that practically? How do you fight one's enemies and at the same time show love to them? Think of it this way: Is it "loving" to let them continue to do what is wrong in society? Is it showing God's love to let evil win?
 - i) Of course not. Remember that we don't know what is His "timing" until we take a step in faith and go out to make a difference for Him. Waiting on God is about taking action to do something about evil, but letting God lead us in that battle. It is about letting the love of God lead us to what is right.

9. Verse 9: For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.
 - a) Here is the ultimate outcome of life: Those who don't trust in God and do only what pleases them will end up in hell after this lifetime. Those who hope in Jesus' payment for our sins will get both heaven and earth as their eternal reward. How that exactly works, I'm not sure, but I know that it is true.
 - b) So if this is true, going back to the previous verse, why fight evil in the first place? If we know that eventually God will win and those who don't trust in God will lose, why "get out of the house" to use an analogy from the last verse?
 - i) The answer is God desires to get us involved in His "game plan". We don't know how God is going to work in our world this day. What we do know is that God desires to use us to make a difference for Him. We can't make a difference unless we "get out of the house" in the first place and go make that difference.
 - ii) Yes it is as simple as praying for (and with) others for God to help them. It also means getting involved in the battles of this world in order to make a difference for Him in all that we do.
 - iii) Believe it or not, this gets back to Verse 4 of the "desires of our heart". If it is the desire of our heart to please God, then that desire should also include the desire to "hate what God hates", which are those who do evil.
 - c) Tying this to Verse 9, the point is "the good guys do win in the end", but it is God's desire to get us involved in the battle of combating evil of the world.
 - i) But how can I as one person do all of that? God is not calling on you and me to do everything, just "something". It is about getting involved to make a difference for God in a way that we desire to make a difference for Him. (Since that desire came from God in the first place, He wants us to use that desire to help Him.)
10. Verse 10: A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. ¹¹ But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace.
 - a) As you study this psalm, one notices that it reads in "pairs". In other words, one phrase or one verse talks about the ultimate outcome of the wicked. The next phrase or the next verse talks about how those who trust God will win in the end.
 - b) In case you are interested, in the original Hebrew, this is another "alphabet psalm". That means the first letter of the first verse starts with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Each "pair of thoughts" then starts with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Obviously it does not work that way in the English.
 - i) So why write a psalm that way, other than being "cute"? I believe it was a way to help Jewish people memorize the psalm. It would be like saying, "A is for the way one does this" and "B is for the way one does that" all through the psalm.
 - ii) The point is to remind the reader of how a person who does not trust in God acts in life, in comparison to the rewards for the believer. I think the purpose of the psalm is not so much to fix the unbeliever, as it is to remind the believer of how we are separated for God to be used by Him.
 - c) Meanwhile, let us discuss these two verses. They say in effect, "Before we know it", those who turn from God are "no more". Verse 11 says the meek get the land.
 - i) Let me discuss the wicked first, and then I will define what "meek" means.
 - ii) The longest period of time the wicked can get away with things is one lifetime. They may be put in jail, or they may prosper all of their lives. The point is such behavior will not go on forever, and eventually does come to an end. David's point here is in effect, "Crime doesn't pay", because there is a God who does punish people who refuse to turn to Him with their lives.
 - iii) This leads us to the "meek". Jesus specifically uses that term and says that "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. (Matthew 5:5, NKJV). It shows that when Jesus made that statement, He was actually quoting Psalm 37, Verse 11.

- d) So, what exactly is the meek, and how should Christians be "meek"?
 - i) The essential idea of "meek" is to have power but not use it. The idea behind the word is that Christians should seek God to deal with their problems and not just "lash out" at someone putting us down for our beliefs or trying to hurt us.
 - ii) Think about this: Is there anywhere in the Gospels that Jesus was ever accused of being arrogant? No. The gospels are full of false accusations against Jesus, but being arrogant is never once even hinted at. Jesus never used His powers of God to put people down or to act better than others. That is what meekness is.
 - iii) OK John, we are not Jesus and do not have His powers. How should we be meek? The idea is that we as believers do have the power to call upon God to help us. We should not claim or to be or act superior to others because of that power. That is what meekness is all about.
 - iv) Bottom line: It is about not acting superior to nonbelievers.
 - v) Getting back to the verse, one of the qualities that God desires of believers is to be meek. God wants us to draw upon His power to make a difference for Him and not put other people down for being nonbelievers.
 - vi) One of the rewards for trusting in God and not being arrogant about it is that we get to share in the eternal blessings of God and inherit the earth.
- 11. Verse 12: The wicked plot against the righteous and gnash their teeth at them; ¹³ but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming.
 - a) I want to give an example of "gnashing their teeth". When I was at my family reunion last week, I literally saw one of my brothers (who does not care for my religious views on things) literally gnash his teeth at me when he saw me talk to one of my other brothers about a specific issue. Over the last two days, I talked to my wife and one of my best Christian friends about the issue. They both told me in effect that one has to expect resistance from nonbelievers and I should not take it personally.
 - b) The second half of this verse talks about how God views such incidents.
 - i) These verses do not mean we should just "leave them be". I have to remind myself that I can't convince my brother or anyone else of God's way of doing things just by talking to them. I need to remember that something's are spiritually discerned and I cannot win people to Christ just by saying the right words.
 - ii) What I am getting at is the idea of literally praying for my brother who doesn't believe in Jesus as God and not just see him as someone going down the wrong path. I cannot fix or change him, but I can bring to God how he "gnashes his teeth" and say to God in effect, "He is your problem, I can't deal with him."
 - c) This pair of verses do remind us of the fate of those who don't trust in God. While we should realize how God sees their action, it should not cause us to act arrogantly (back to my meek speech) or just turn away from them. We still need to approach people with God's love in hand as that is how we do reach out to such nonbelievers.
 - d) OK John, you keep saying "God's love". What do you mean by that? The essential idea is to treat other people better than they are treating us. We need to show kindness to them despite however they treat us. For example, the next time I see my brother, I should show him some extraordinary act of kindness. That would make up for any possibility of any arrogance I could have shown over that incident.
 - i) Tying this thought to these verses, the idea is to realize how God acts to those who either literally or figuratively speaking "gnash their teeth" at us, but at the same time we should not act proudly knowing how God is supporting those who have committed their lives to serving Him.
 - ii) OK, enough of my problems. ☺ Let's move on to the next set of verses.

12. Verse 14: The wicked draw the sword and bend the bow to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose ways are upright. ¹⁵ But their swords will pierce their own hearts, and their bows will be broken.
- a) These verses state or imply that wicked people use what weapons they have to hurt those who are poor and needy. Verse 15 says in effect, that the weapons these people have will somehow hurt themselves.
 - i) I'll spare you another "Willie E. Coyote" similarity sermon at this point. ☺
 - ii) So is this literally true? Do wicked people literally shoot at believers and literally have those same weapons shot at them on judgment day? Well personally, I don't want to get close enough to such unbelievers on judgment day to find out.
 - iii) Remember that these verses are written for believers (us) to read and contemplate and not for them. Again, we can't fix people. We can, through passages like this in the bible, be aware of the fates of unbelievers and that is the point. Yes it is about being aware of attacks against us, but it is also about our attitude.
 - b) OK John, since these verses are for us, what should we do with these verses?
 - i) When we are hurt by the words or actions of nonbelievers, we have to remember our ultimate fate and their ultimate fate for using those weapons used against us and against other innocent people. If they are doing something to break the law, then we should get involved or get police involved to right the wrong. If that is not possible, at the least, we should get God involved in the situation to help out those who are hurt by such actions. We should also whenever possible help those who have been innocently hurt by the actions of the wicked.
 - c) I am reminded of an old joke used in my real estate appraisal profession: The question is, how does one tell if a specific property is located an urban location, a suburban location or a rural location? The answer is, if a naked man was standing outside in a rural location, nobody would notice. If a naked man stood outside in a suburban location, the neighbors would call the police. If a naked man were standing outside in an urban location, the neighbors would look the other way and pretend not to notice. ☺
 - i) The point of that joke as it applies here, is that God wants us to get involved in the world and not just turn the other way when we see a "naked person". Sometimes it means helping that person and sometimes it means to call the police. My point is not the specifics of the situation as much as it is for us to make a difference to the world around us and not just ignore the people that live around us.
13. Verse 16: Better the little that the righteous have than the wealth of many wicked; ¹⁷ for the power of the wicked will be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous.
- a) In case you haven't noticed by now, I am tackling verses two at a time, as again, every two verses are designed to be a "pair" to show the contrast between the saved and unsaved.
 - b) In this pair of verses, God is reminding us that it is better to have a right relationship with God than to have all the wealth that many wicked people have. That, it is because there will come a day when all the wealth of the nonbeliever "comes to nothing", while those of us who trust in God will have a wonderful eternal life with Him.
 - c) By the way, that does not mean we ignore financially providing for ourselves or of our families. These verses have nothing to do with ignoring good planning or wanting to work hard to provide for our families' needs. It just means we as Christians need to get our priorities right. Our first desire in life is to make a difference for God in all that we do. Part of pleasing Him may include working to provide for our selves and our families.
 - d) What each of the pair of verses of this lesson is designed to do is to remind us of the waste of time to try to live like nonbelievers. This has nothing to do with financial status. Remember that David was a king and had all of the financial blessings of being a king.
 - e) What this specific pair of verses is doing is teaching us to observe the life of the nonbeliever and realize that just living to acquire "things" is a waste of a life.

14. Verse 18: The days of the blameless are known to the LORD, and their inheritance will endure forever. ¹⁹ In times of disaster they will not wither; in days of famine they will enjoy plenty.
 - a) In this pair of verses, we get reminded that those who put their trust in God will endure (live with Him) forever.
 - b) Verse 19 is the interesting one. It says in effect in times of disaster, God will still provide for us and we don't have to worry about famines.
 - i) So does that mean that Christians never die from famines? Since I never lived through a famine (and hopefully never will) I cannot answer for every situation.
 - ii) The point is that we can trust in God to get us through rough times. We may still have to work hard and possibly take jobs we may not particularly like. It means we don't have to worry about such times as God promises to take care of us.
 - c) Here's another point to consider about these verses: Why worry about the future if we know (not think, but know) that God will take care of us during the "day of famine"?
 - d) If the bible is promising us here that God will take care of those who are His, why do we worry about what is happening in our world or what could happen to us?
 - i) This does not mean we don't get involved to try to make our world a better place. These verses just remind us that God takes care of us no matter what. Why worry about what could happen when God promises to take care of us?
15. Verse 20: But the wicked will perish: The LORD's enemies will be like the beauty of the fields, they will vanish--vanish like smoke.
 - a) Verse 20 is kind of strange when one thinks about it. David here describes those who don't care about God as the "beauty of the fields". The text then says that those people will be like the fields that vanish like smoke.
 - i) Visualize a beautiful field. Put whatever you want (in terms of plant life or some sort of crops) in that field. Now picture it being on fire and going up in smoke.
 - ii) Ok, that wasn't pretty. ☺ What is the purpose of the statement of this verse?
 - a) David is trying to give a visual picture of the waste of a life of those who don't seek God. What such people acquire in this lifetime may seem pretty to gaze at, but there will come a time when what they have will disappear as quickly as a pile of smoke.
 - iii) The idea here is to remember what is important. It is not about ignoring the importance of providing for our loved ones. It is about the danger of desiring "stuff" more than desiring to please God in our lives.
16. Verse 21: The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously;
 - a) At first I thought this verse was about borrowing and not returning. Then I remembered that one must compare the thought of the first half of a "pair of thoughts" to the second half. So, given that those verses are designed to work in "pairs", then what are these verses saying and why should I care?
 - i) Let me start by asking the question, "What do the righteous give generously?" Does that mean that all Christians make enough money to share with others? In a sense, we do. A sign of being a believer is that we don't "hoard" what we have, but we are willing to give to church and others because we trust that somehow God will provide for our future.
 - ii) A sign that one is a believer is that one does not trust in what they have, but trust that God will take care of them in the future. Given that trust, we are willing to share what we have with others.
 - b) So what does that principal of "sharing what we have" have to do with wicked people not repaying what they have borrowed? The answer is those who don't trust in God are afraid to let go of what they have borrowed and thus don't make an effort to return it.
 - i) It could refer to material things or it could refer to the fact that God has blessed their lives and they refuse to share what they have gained with others.

17. Verse 22: those the LORD blesses will inherit the land, but those he curses will be cut off.
 - a) Here we have another reminder that who trust in God will "inherit the land" and those who don't trust in God, to put it bluntly are sent to hell.
 - b) Let me take this opportunity to ask, "What is the reward of inheriting the land?" I thought when we are saved, we get this great big house (See John 14:2) and then we just kick back for eternity. Well, our mansions have to be bolted down somewhere. ☺
 - i) The book of Revelation (21:1) and Isaiah (65:17 and 66:22) speak of a new heaven and a new earth. I don't know if that means God "blows this one up" or somehow it changes dramatically from the way we know it now.
 - ii) Whatever the new earth is, those who believe in God will get it. So what do we do on this new earth? The bible is surprisingly silent on that issue. It is as if God is telling us in effect, "You (that's us) just worry about being obedient to Me (God) in this life and I'll take care of what happens to you in the next one."
 - c) Before I move on, I want you to notice that Verses 21 and 22 are designed to be connected. There is no period at the end of Verse 21 and the first letter of Verse 22 is not capitalized.
 - i) So, what does the generosity principal of Verse 21 have to do with the "saved and inherit the land" principal of Verse 22? Everything. People always want to know how do I know for sure that I am going to heaven? Obviously, the first step is our confession that Jesus is both Lord (in charge) and God. The next step after we acknowledge our submission to God is to live the Christian life. One sign that we are living such a life is that we trust that God will provide for our future, and therefore we don't "hoard" things. That means we are not afraid to give to others and we share the blessings that God has given us with others.
 - ii) By the way, this is not a speech to give more to one's church or whatever. The key is our attitude, not any specific amounts of giving. If we trust in God, that attitude will show in how we treat the blessings we do have in life.
18. Verse 23: If the LORD delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; ²⁴ though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand.
 - a) The big question of these two verses is "how"? The verses say that God makes the steps of those who trust in Him "firm". Verse 24 goes on to say that those who trust in God will "stumble, but not fall" as if God will hold that person up with His Hand.
 - i) First of all, God does not have actual hands. These verses are not meant to be taken that literally. Since we know historically millions have died as martyrs, how do we interpret the act of God making the step's "firm" of the believer?
 - ii) Given the reality of many Christians dying for their beliefs, what are these verses saying? I believe they are simply saying that God gives believers the physical strength to keep going through whatever life throws at us.
 - b) I just recently heard a wonderful story of a Christian man who went through a terrible trial at the time of his son's birth (now six years ago). Over a one-year period, there were a number of times where this man almost lost both his wife and his son. Without going into a lot of detail, let's just say it wasn't a "one day and done story".
 - i) My point is God gave this man (and his wife) the physical strength to get through that period of time. He said that there were moments where he was "so low" he couldn't move a muscle. I think that is a wonderful example of "stumbling but not falling" as these verses describe. By having a trust that God will get one through a tough situation, God does so in a way that makes it obvious He is working there.
 - ii) OK John, I've never had a moment like that. How do I know God will get me through my tough times? That is what trusting in Him is all about. I don't know the specifics of your lives. I do know that trusting in God will get us through the moments when it feels like everything is falling apart.

19. Verse 25: I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.
 - a) I have to admit this is my favorite verse in the psalm and one that I quote on occasions.
 - b) There have been moments in my life where I have been afraid because I didn't know what to do next financially and had real fears that I would be begging for food. The reality is I have never come close to that point and I realize it was not my skills that protected me, but God has always made a way for me to get through those situations.
 - c) I have personally watched believers get to a point where they are so low they don't know how they will get through the day, let alone provide for others. In such times, we have to take comfort in God's promises, and here is one of them in this verse.
 - d) The point is not that God will allow all of us to get to a very low point. The point is that no matter what happens in life, we can trust that God will see us through rough times and we don't have to worry about our "worst fears" of say, having to beg for food.
 - e) Does this verse also mean we shouldn't help people begging for food, because if they are a true believer, they would not gotten to that point in life? No.
 - i) First of all, having an attitude of wanting to help others is what God desires of us. When we give and to whom we give, is up to us and I try to let God lead me as to when to say yes and when to say no.
20. Verse 26: They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed.
 - a) The "they" of this verse, is us. Again, we are generous not because we have lots of money or stuff, but because we realize that such stuff is temporary and our trust is not in that stuff but in God who does and will take care of us.
 - b) So how are our children blessed? If we give to others, isn't that leaving less for our kids? Our children are blessed because we are passing on the right attitude about possessions.
21. Verse 27: Turn from evil and do good; then you will dwell in the land forever.
 - a) OK, after describing all of the wonderful promises God makes to believer, we now get this statement of turning from evil to God in order to inherit His promises. What gives? ☺
 - i) I believe the point is to remind us of our own shortcomings. Remember that this verse is for the believer. It is a reminder to us that God will take care of us and to be generous with our time and possessions.
 - b) In summary, prosperity in God's eyes is about not being afraid to let go of what God has given us so that He can give us more with which to bless others.
22. Verse 28: For the LORD loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever, but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off; ²⁹ the righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever.
 - a) Verse 28 hit me in a very positive way. In the few days since I wrote the early part of this lesson about my family, God has given me some wonderful experiences that has drawn me closer to Him. I'm sharing that with you as I have learned that God does not forsake those who are loyal to Him, which is the point of Verse 28.
 - i) In other words, if you are going through a period where you have had to deal with nonbelievers, I find that God finds a way of drawing us back to Him as He as done to me in the past few days.
 - ii) Don't get me wrong. I still am dealing with the same issues and the same family problems as a few days ago. At the same time, I can clearly see how God works in my life to draw upon His love during the times when we are tested.
 - b) This leads us back to the verses. Sometimes it is hard to remember that we are the "righteous ones" as described through this psalm. We are not perfect beings, but God sees us in our future, fully forgiven state, which makes us the righteous ones. We are separated from the nonbelievers not because we are better people, but solely due to our trust in God and our trust in His love.

23. Verse 30: The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just.
- a) The times where I do utter wisdom do not come when I am "full of myself" and focusing on my own life. The times where we as Christians are "righteous" are when we are focusing on His love. The times where we as Christians speak what is "just" means that we speak the truths of life that God teaches us.
 - i) I have found that the moments where I shine the best is when I am relying upon His love to work through me to make a difference for Him.
24. Verse 31: The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip.
- a) Does this verse mean we have to memorize God's laws so those laws are on our heart? Of course not. So if that is true, how do our "feet not slip"? Glad you asked. ☺
 - i) Remember that Jesus summarized all of the Old Testament laws with the concept of loving God with all of our heart (in other words, as much as we can) and loving our neighbor as ourselves. (See Mark 12:29-31).
 - ii) Still, no one can focus on God around the clock. How do we do this practically?
 - iii) It means spending time regularly with God and having the desire to know as much as possible about Him and what He desires for our lives. We can only do that by prayer and time in His word. If we care about God, then we should also care about what else God created, which is other people.
 - b) This verse is not saying we will never sin. This verse is saying that God will watch over us until it is time for Him to call us home. The idea of "not slipping" means we will be faithful to Him because we trust in Him and we trust that He will lead us into salvation.
25. Verse 32: The wicked lie in wait for the righteous, seeking their very lives;³³ but the LORD will not leave them in their power or let them be condemned when brought to trial.
- a) Meanwhile back the wicked. ☹ These verses remind us that although the wicked desire to "put us down" and maybe even seek our lives, we have to remember who will win and who will be brought to a great and final trial of their lives.
 - b) One of the wonderful things about being a Christian is that none of our sins will be remembered when we die. God will not present us a list of our faults and say in effect, "Here is what I have forgiven you of". (See Hebrews 8:12 and 10:17).
 - c) Psalm 103:12 says that God separates us from our sins "as far as the east is from the west". If you think about that, if one travels north or south, there is a limit to how far one can travel. If one keeps traveling west or east, there is no finish line, and that is the point here.
 - d) As I stated a few lessons back, there are two separate judgments. The first judgment is for believers and determines our rewards in heaven. There is no condemnation at that first judgment. The second judgment has lots of condemnation, and that is the point of Verse 33. I don't know if David understand the concept of the two judgments as explained in Revelation 20:4-6, but David did understand that the saved are not judged as taught here.
26. Verse 34: Wait for the LORD and keep his way. He will exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you will see it.
- a) Verse 34 is what I call the "hang in there" verse. If and when we are going through times when it appears like everything is falling apart, we need to remind ourselves of Verse 34.
 - b) God never promises He will rescue us "now" from our present situation. He does promise there is coming a day when those who are wicked (i.e., turn from Him) will be cut off, which means sent to hell. So does that mean we actually watch the trials of the wicked and see their eternal punishment? I don't know. That is a "wait and see" question.
 - c) This verse also brings us back to the theme of us "inheriting the land". So what does that term "inherit the land" mean? I'm not positive, but I'm sure God has wonderful plans for our eternal lives and somehow that involves the "new earth". (See Ephesians 2:7 as support of the idea of God having a wonderful future for believers.)

27. Verse 35: I have seen a wicked and ruthless man flourishing like a green tree in its native soil,
³⁶but he soon passed away and was no more; though I looked for him, he could not be found.
 - a) Here is the last set of verses that describe any sort of positive benefit for the wicked. These verses remind us that those who turn from God do get benefits in this lifetime, but in effect, that is all they get.
 - b) I have heard that living the Christian life is all about the question, "Are you living for this life or the next one?" It doesn't mean we can't have happy moments in this lifetime. It just means that if the purpose of our lives is to give glory to God, our next lives will be blessed and God will give us joy in this life no matter what our circumstances.
28. Verse 37: Consider the blameless, observe the upright; there is a future for the man of peace.
³⁸But all sinners will be destroyed; the future of the wicked will be cut off.
 - a) Let me describe these two verses this way: Are believers still tempted by sin? Of course. When such times come, we should think of the future of both the saved and the condemned and that may help us go down the right path.
 - i) If we are contemplating some sort of sin either with a person or against a person, pause just for a second and pray for that person. We overcome sin not by willpower, but by putting God between that potential sin and ourselves.
 - ii) OK, let's say we pray and we are still tempted to commit a specific sin. Congratulations you are normal. If this is an issue one is stuck on, consider getting involved in some sort of accountability group. Sometimes having to face that group gives us the strength to turn away from a particular sin.
29. Verse 39: The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold 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.
 - a) The last two lines of the psalm focus on God Himself. They remind us that life "begins and ends" with Him. Just as He has called us to a life of following Him, so we can trust that He is faithful to see us through our entire life. The point is we don't have to fear anything in this lifetime. Yes we can suffer pain or death, but the worst that can happen is suffering in this lifetime. We can be grateful that God is faithful to see us through our lives here on earth.
 - b) The good news of this psalm in effect is that it is not up to us, but it is up to God. The reason the righteous "win", is not because we are better people than the wicked, but because God does win in the end.
30. Let me end this study where I started, in my complaints about dealing with non-saved people in my life. In a sense, I don't have to worry about those who want to see me harmed, because I have confidence I will win, because "The game is fixed" as God has already made me (us) the victors.
 - a) Do I still want to see members of my family saved? Of course and I pray for that daily. Still, I know it is up to God and not up to me. If it were up to me, I would blow it. If it is up to God, I have confidence that He will lead all that He desires to lead to Him. That still means you and I have to work at making a difference for Him. God chooses to work through people and that is where we come in the picture.
 - b) Still, remember that just as this psalm in effect begins and ends with what God is doing in our lives, we don't have to worry or "try harder", just trust in Him and let Him work through our lives to make a difference for Him. On that happy note, time for prayer.
31. Father, I don't know what You have planned for me for the rest of my life here on earth. I just know that "in the end" those who trust in You are saved to spend eternity with You. Help me to remember to pray for the unsaved around me. Help me to give nonbelievers to you and not try to "fix them" myself. Help us to remember that You are working in our lives and You will see us through all of our difficult times as well as the wonderful moments of our lives. Help us to make a difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.