

Stayin' On the High Road

Don't worry about the wicked. Don't envy those who do wrong. For like grass, they soon fade away. Like springtime flowers, they soon wither. Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires. Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you. He will make your innocence as clear as the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun. Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for Him to act. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes. Stop your anger! Turn from your rage! Do not envy others - - it only leads to harm. Psalm 37:1-8

Christians would deny it, but we sometimes believe that evil is more powerful than good. Why else, when we are doing well but people say or do nasty things against us, do we respond in like spirit? Why do we respond to evil, with evil?

Psalm 37 says that the good guys win, but it also has qualifications and conditions. Here's what happens.

Let's say we're doing something well, and someone else is jealous. Or we're a leader and some decisions we've made threaten people with vested interests. We are on the high road. But then someone gossips about us personally or complains about our leadership. They have come at us on the low road. Our destiny is in our next move!

Far too often Christians drop to the level of those who have come against us. We don't believe that God will set the record straight. We don't believe that wisdom, righteousness and truth can have a prevailing voice. We are insecure. We feel threatened. We rush to protect our reputation or leadership position like a mother bear her cubs, and then we can't figure out why God doesn't correct (or better yet, slay) our accusers.

Here's why He doesn't. When we were walking in godliness, there was something for God to defend. He wanted to help us. To prove our innocence. But when we dropped down to the low road to meet our accusers and engage them in battle, we stepped from the place of innocence and disqualified ourselves from His vindication! It's just that simple! We can do it His way, or our way, but not both ways.

Read those verses again. We must trust God – instead of relying on our own wits and arguments. I discovered years ago that there are many reasons that people come against us. The reasons they give are rarely the true reasons. Often they don't *want* to know the facts. Because of something else that is going on inside of them, they *have* to think what they think! Logic, rationale and truth are immaterial to them. The more you argue the worse it gets – meanwhile God waits to help!

When we envy the apparent success of those who come against us we become angry and defensive, which gives the opposition more ammunition. The original issues almost don't matter. We have fallen into a trap and we had part in setting it! I've been there and done that!

We need to wait patiently for God. Give Him time – in spite of our sense of urgency to fix things. Let Him do it His way. He *is* a God of justice. Righteousness, truth and wisdom *do* have a voice! I admit that it might take time, even years (Read "A Thousand Years Is - -") for your vindication to

be fully realized, but in the end you win and in the meantime you're at peace and able to live and work under God's blessing.

The humble realization that we're rarely as right as we think we are, and that we probably don't deserve as much vindication as we think we do, should mellow us and motivate us to let God sort things out!

I have seen it. It is true, what David writes: "He will make your innocence as clear as the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun." I put that to the test some years back in a major conflict situation. I determined to be "A Psalm 37 man to the end" – at any cost. They could take my position. They could rob me of my ability to move an organization toward a goal we had been committed to together. They could renege on commitments. I would accept humiliation but I would not engage my accusers on the low road.

God helped me. I lost my position but I won the respect of those around me. God has done for me all that Psalm 37 says, and more. I wouldn't trade places with those who "won," for anything in the world!

Romans 12:17-21 is a powerful text on this issue, addressing both sides of conflict. And God used my wife Elaine to take me to I Peter 5:6-10 some 30 years ago in the heat of the battle. Check it out!

"Bad" doesn't have the last word for those who trust God. "Good" does – if we will give it room and time to work. God *wants* to fight our battles for us. He longs to get between us and the enemy, as He did for Israel on so many occasions. But we don't let Him do it. We fight the battle ourselves, without His help, as Israel did sometimes with such terrible results.

However, while God is totally committed to our welfare, He is *not* committed to keeping our ego from being bruised. We look at our pride, He looks at His eternal purposes. We look at the moment, but He looks at the big picture. I've decided that I would rather lose the argument and win the battle, than win the argument and lose the battle. I've done both often enough to know the difference!

And here's the kicker. Any time that I have acted decently when men took something from me, God has replaced it with something better. No – make that "*Far* better!" Even while I was still licking my wounds, I knew that I would rather have "this," than "that."

Don't envy the apparent success of those who come against you. Trust in the Lord, continue to do good, and you will experience God's prosperity for you. Delight in Him and He will give you the desires – the *deepest* desires – of your heart. Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust Him, and He will help you do it. And when things get tough, He will reveal your innocence to those who matter.

And let me tell you something. Eventually, even those who had made themselves your enemies will respect you. Trust me. No, trust Him!!

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