

THE SALVATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS COMES FROM THE LORD

In general, we like things to follow patterns. We usually desire that individuals get what they deserve. It is very satisfying to see good get rewarded, and equally so when the not-so-good receive punishment. In the Hebrew tradition of wisdom literature, no book exemplifies this axiomatic outlook more than Proverbs. This book is like a young idealist who sees the world in very neat and distinct terms - black and white with no room for gray areas.

With that foundational thought laid down, I see Psalm 37 in much the same light as the book of Proverbs. This is one of David's longer poems, structured in a special way, which lacks the emotion that flavors many of his songs up to this point. He presents life in the way that it should be - the way we all would like it to be. Righteousness equals reward. Self-centeredness brings suffering. Trusting in Yahweh leads to one's deliverance while trusting in oneself alone brings about ultimate destruction.

I certainly encourage each of you to read (and of course re-read) Psalm 37. How simply marvelous life would be if everyone trusted in the LORD and obeyed his commands. How right life would feel if bad people got what they deserved, their comeuppance, if you will.

It is good to be reminded of the ideal from time to time. Likewise, it is good to keep in mind a couple of other Hebrew wisdom books - Ecclesiastes and Job. The musings of the Teacher point out that life doesn't always fall into neat, cause-and-effect categories yet, through it all, we should fear God and keep his commands. The narrator of Job's story pulls back the spiritual/physical curtain to show us that life cannot always be fully and properly explained from our limited perspectives. God, however, is in control and will do what is right.

David, in Psalm 37, reminds us that it is good to do good, and it is bad to be bad. Hang in there and remember, *The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him* (Psalm 37:40).

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