

# WORDS TO LIVE BY

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PSALM 37:1-8, 34 • TV429B

A television broadcast sermon delivered  
SUNDAY, MAY 24<sup>TH</sup>, 1992  
by  
**HENRY T. MAHAN**

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## **Psalm 37:1-8, 34**

*Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.*

*34. Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.*

My message today will be taken from **David's Psalm 37**: If you would like to, get your Bible and open it to **Psalm 37**. The title of the message is: "**WORDS TO LIVE BY.**" This message is one that I preached to our congregation, some time ago. It came to me one morning after I received three telephone calls from friends who were going through very difficult, difficult times. I sat down to study and prepare my message for that particular Wednesday night, and this was early Wednesday morning.

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The first call I received was from a friend in Alabama, whom I've known for many, many years. He was recovering from brain surgery. He had a tumor and they removed it. He was taking several treatments. He was having a very, very, difficult time. He called to request prayer. He's a man who loves the gospel. He loves God, yet, he was going through a terribly, terribly, difficult time.

After I talked to him and began studying again, the phone rang and the second call was from a friend not too far from me, whose mother had died the night before. He requested that I come and preach his mother's funeral. It was such a sad time for him and for the family. I talked to him a little while and hung up.

The phone rang again! This time it was a friend that lived up in the Northwest near Idaho and Oregon, somewhere around Washington State. He was expressing his disappointment over the fact that he had nowhere to worship God and hear the true gospel preached. There were churches but no voice, no preacher, no bold prophet of God to preach the Word and to teach him the scriptures. He was so hungry to hear the Word. He asked that I send him some tapes that he might listen to the preaching of the gospel.

These are everyday occurrences. The people of God, believers in Christ, and children of God are not without trials, I mean heavy trials, severe trials. They have trouble and sorrow. Sometimes it is more difficult than other times.

We have words to die by. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "*Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's House are many mansions or dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*" Those are words to live by and die by. These are words to especially to die by. They are the promise of life, the promises of glory and happiness.

In Philippians One, Paul said, "*To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. To live is Christ; to die is gain. I am in a straight betwixt the two. I have a desire to depart and be with the Lord which is far better.*" Those are words to die by.

Sometimes it is more difficult to live for the glory of God than to die for the glory of God (I know many of you know what I am talking about). Sometimes it is easier just to die and leave here and to avoid any more difficulty. Sometimes that is a lot easier. Sometimes it is harder to live for the glory of God than to die for the glory of God.

I want you to look with me at **Psalm 37**. Now, the author of this Psalm is David. He was a man after God's own heart, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, the mighty king, and the man whom God called, "*A man after Mine own heart.*" That is what the Lord said about him.

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It is worth listening to this man isn't it? He was writing under the divine inspiration of God.

This **Psalm 37** was written in David's old age. That is when he wrote it. I'm not guessing, **verse 25** tells me that. David, in **verse 25** of this Psalm, says, "*I have been young, I am now old.*" So, I know when he wrote it. He was "*now, old.*" He said, "*I have never seen the righteous forsaken or God's seed begging bread.*" They don't beg bread and they are not forsaken. They are God's seed. He said, "*I was young, but now I am old.*"

Now, the occasion of this Psalm is the affliction of God's people. That is what it is about, especially in the light of the prosperity of the wicked. If you would like, jot these two Psalms down and study them (Psalm 37 and Psalm 73). These Psalms deal with the afflictions of God's people in the light of the prosperity of the wicked. David saw that the wicked prospered while believers suffered. He saw that folks that didn't know God, love God, and didn't have an interest in God, seemed to have an easier road than those that did know God.

David complained about it, so the Lord took him to the House of the Lord and showed him things that he needed to consider. He needed to consider the end of these people. David said, "When I saw their end, the results of their rebellion, I confessed my sin."

You have in this 37th Psalm, David; the old experienced elder, sitting with the family of God about him. They are listening to him speak on the Divine inspiration of daily living and daily walking. He gives us in this Psalm some words to live by.

I'll give you several and here is the **first one**: In **verse 1**: "*Fret not thyself because of evil doers and the wicked.*" It is so common for us in the hour of trouble to fret. Do you have trouble with that? We fret in time of sickness, and in time of sorrow and disappointment. We become discouraged. We become weary of the pain. We find time to complain and we find fault with the good Providence of God. Sometimes, we even feel that our way is too difficult, especially when we see others who have a much easier way. We see them and they are getting along so well but we are having a very difficult time. We begin to fret and complain and find fault with the Providence of God. Do you ever do that? Well, he says, "Don't do that, don't fret. The wicked shall be cut down like the grass and the believer is going to reign."

The believer is going to reign with Christ. The way of the wicked is temporary. This way of prosperity is temporary and it doesn't have anything to do with God's way for me. My way is not temporary. My way with God is eternal. These light affections through which we pass now, are not worthy to be compared with the glory we shall enjoy in His presence.

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It is not worthy to be compared. These are light afflictions for the moment and they are not worthy to be compared with what is ahead.

Let me tell you a story. Before Queen Elizabeth became the Queen of England, she was a princess (she would become known as “good Queen Bess”). The wicked Queen who reigned before her knew that she was heir to the throne, so she put her in prison. While in prison, Princess Elizabeth found herself envying the milkmaid (it was the milkmaid who would bring her food, milk and these other things that were provided for her while in the prison cell). Queen Elizabeth later wrote, “I envied the milkmaid because she had freedom to come and go, but I was kept like a bird in a cage.”

Let me tell you something, if she had known at that time, the glorious reign that she would enjoy for 44 years, she would never have envied the milkmaid. She is going to reign as Queen of England for 44 years. If she had known that, while she was sitting in that prison cell, she would never have envied the milkmaid and wanted to trade places with the milkmaid. Now, I say to you, in your cell, and in your suffering and in your time of difficulty, think not, envy not and “*fret not*,” concerning those who seem to have freedom to come and go. You are the one with the freedom.

“*If you know the Son, the Son will set you free.*” If you know the truth, the truth will really set you free. So, you just think. Don’t think about things on this earth that are temporal. Think on things that are eternal. “*Set your affection on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God on your inheritance.*” You are going to reign some day with Him. This trial is to prepare you for that day. That’s the word, “*Don’t fret.*”

**Secondly**, another word to live by is trust. “*Trust in the Lord*,” it says. I will tell you, to trust in the Lord will cure fretting. That is the way to stop fretting and complaining and finding fault. You have to trust Him.

I go down to Mexico every year. I have been doing that for 21 or 22 years. We have two veteran Missionaries, in Mexico, who have been there for over 25 years. They have several churches there where I preach and several open-air meetings where I preach through a translator. I go down every year and stay two or three weeks.

While I am down there, there are a lot of causes for fear and for fretting. There is a language barrier and I don’t speak Spanish. Everything you read is in Spanish and everything you hear is in Spanish and I am among people who do not speak my language. Secondly, I’m down there among people who are not friendly to Americans. I’m down there where you can’t drink the water except in certain described places. You can’t eat certain foods. I go out into villages where “Gringo” has never been. I go into villages where Missionaries have been driven out before. We climb mountains in four-wheel drive vehicles. There are just a lot of things to fear and fret about unless you trust someone.

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The two Missionaries with me have lived there 25 years. They know the people and they know the area. They are doing the driving, and they are selecting the foods. They tell me what water I can drink, what village we can visit, and what people are friendly. I trust them. I trust these men. In trusting them, I am not afraid. Now, if I were alone down there, in many of these places, I would be afraid. I trust these able men.

I will tell you this, I trust my Lord! *“I know that I’m going through the valley of the shadow of death.”* I’m not alone. He said, *“Thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, (the rod of defense, the rod of correction, the staff of provision), “Thy rod and thy staff comfort me.”* I trust the Lord. *“Fret not.”* Trust Him!

Trust in His love for you. Trust in His blood shed for you. Trust in His righteousness imputed to you. Trust in His care. Trust in His good providence. *“Our steps are ordered by the Lord.”* Isn’t that what the scripture says? *“He chose us, He loved us, He redeemed us and He called us.”* He will keep us. He says, *“I will never leave you. I will never forsake you.”* He knows the way I take and after I have been tried, *“I will come forth as gold.”* Isn’t that what the scripture says? Trust Him! That is the word to live by.

Here is the **third one**: Here is another word to live by, *“Delight thyself in the Word of the Lord.”* Notice how these words follow one another. *“Don’t fret,”* don’t complain, don’t be filled with anxiety and anxious care, trust Him. Not only that; trust Him, but delight yourself, find your rest and find your encouragement and assurance in the Word of the Lord. His promises are precious. You know, if I can really learn to trust the Lord, then I will find delight and joy in His Words. That is if you trust Him. You will find delight and joy in His promises and in His gospel.

Where do people in this world find their delight and their joy? I will tell you, it is in the things that perish. They delight in riches; they delight in fine homes, and luxurious toys. They delight in entertainment and they delight in the things of this world. These things die with them. The believer finds his joy and his delight in the Eternal Word of God and in the promises of God.

*“We have an inheritance, undefiled, incorruptible that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven.”* We have God’s Word, *“God who cannot lie.”* We delight in it! We have no reason to be discouraged. Our hope and our confidence is not in ourselves. It is not even in our profession. Our hope is not in our religious leaders and not even in our Pastors. Our confidence, assurance and hope are in our God and in His Word. Do you see that? *“Delight thyself in the Word of God.”*

I can tell you this, not only from scripture, but also from personal experience. When you are down, fretful, uneasy, fearful and doubting, don’t go to another person and seek help; go to the scriptures. Turn to the **Book of Psalms**, turn to the writings of our Lord, and turn to those encouraging passages of scripture and read them. Lay hold of them and appropriate them for yourself. These are men whom God blessed to write the scriptures and they are for your comfort, they are for your edification, and they are for your faith.

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Read the Word of God, “*Delight thyself in the Word of the Lord.*” It can’t perish. He can’t lie.

**Fourthly**, here is another word: In **verse 5**: “*Commit thy way unto the Lord and He will bring it to pass.*” Paul used this word in his definition of faith in **Second Timothy 1:12**, he said, “*I am not ashamed, I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I committed unto Him against that day.*”

What does it mean to commit something? Let me tell you what one of the old writers said years ago, “*Commit thy way unto the Lord, He will bring it to pass.*” This means, to roll the whole business of life and eternity upon the Lord and to leave it to thy God. You don’t only leave the present trial, but all your life and all your care and all your family and hope. Cast away anxiety, cast away worry and fear and resign your life, resign your will and resign your way unto Him. Roll your whole burden upon the Lord and take every care and every sin to Him and leave it there!

There was an old black preacher who pastored one of the Northern churches many years ago. His name was C.A. Tindley. He was born a slave before the Civil War. When that war was over and he was 20 years of age, he went North. He couldn’t read or write and he became a helper for a Stonemason. He learned the trade. Later, he went to night school and learned to read and write. He was brought to the knowledge of the gospel and he became a janitor of this huge church up North. He was 50 years old and his Pastor died. They made C.A. Tindley, the former slave, the former illiterate, former Stonemason helper, and former janitor, the pastor of that church.

He wrote:

If the world from you withhold  
Of its silver and its gold  
And you have to get along with meager fair,  
Just remember in God’s Word  
How He feeds the little bird,  
Take your burden to the Lord  
And leave it there.

Leave it there; leave it there  
Take your burden to the Lord  
And leave it there.

When your youthful days are gone  
And old age is stealing on  
And your body bends  
Beneath the weight of care,

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He will never leave you then  
So, take your burdens to the Lord  
And leave it there.

When your youthful days are gone  
And old age is stealing on  
And your body bends beneath the weight of care,  
He'll never leave you then  
He'll go with you to the end  
So take your burden to the Lord  
And leave it there.

*“Commit thy way unto the Lord, He will bring it to pass.”* Can you learn that?  
That is a word to live by. Another hymn writer wrote:

It's Thy way, not mine, O Lord  
How ever dark it be,  
Lead me by Thy hand O Lord  
And choose my path for me.

Smooth, let it be or rough  
It will still be the best,  
Winding or straight, it matters not  
It will lead me to Thy rest.

I dare not choose my lot  
I would not if I might,  
But, choose for me O Lord  
That I may walk aright.

*“Fret not and trust. “Delight thyself in the Word of the Lord. Commit thy way to Him.”*

**Fifthly**, Here is another word: The word is rest. *“Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him.”* Oh, if I can just cease to carry my burdens. If I can just cease to carry them myself and commit them to Him, then I can rest. I can't rest as long as I'm trying to help Him, as long as I am trying to help myself. I can't rest.

Do you have rest and peace? Not many people do. This is a world of unrest. Oh, I know that there are a lot of people saying, *“Peace, peace, when there is no peace.”* I'm talking about real peace and rest of soul. There is peace of mind, and comfort and assurance of heart, no matter the trial. Christ said, *“Come to Me and I will give you rest.”* He said, *“Cease from your labors and enter into His rest.”* He said, *“Thou keep Him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.”* That is what this word is here, *“Rest in the Lord.”*

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Suppose there is a man walking up a hill and he is carrying a heavy, heavy load. He struggles and he falls beneath the load. The load is too heavy for him. Here comes a friend and that friend loves him. That friend is strong and that friend is able to carry many loads. When he comes up next to this friend, he just reaches it and takes his load. He puts it on his own shoulder and begins to walk up the hill.

What is this man to do? His friend has the load. The man needs to rest. He needs to walk along beside him. He needs to be thankful and grateful. He doesn't need to take the load back. The scripture says, "*Take it to the Lord and leave it there and rest.*" He is fully able, capable and willing to bear your load and to put away your sin.

Look at this word in **verse 8**: "*Cease from anger.*" I suppose that this word is one of the most difficult assignments of all isn't it? We can get mad! "*Cease from anger.*" This is an important word. It is as necessary as the word rest and peace. Cease from anger against God's Providence. Cease from anger against unbelievers. If it were not for the grace of God you would be one. Cease from anger against relatives. Cease from anger from other believers. Cease from anger that leads to vengeance. Don't let another person's neglect or indifference or ingratitude or bad treatment of you; cause you to lose your peace and your rest. "*Cease from anger.*"

I know this, and I am as guilty as you are. I need to learn this word to live by, "*The wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God.*" Anger is not going to change the situation. Anger only makes it worse. That is true and you know that it is true. Anger is not going to change it, it is not going to improve it, and it will make it worse. Besides that, it is going to rob us of our fellowship with God. "*Cease from anger.*"

Now, here is the last word: In **verse 34**, the words to live by. Here is the final word; I'll mention it before we close. The word is **wait!** You know, most of the mistakes that I have and do make are impulsiveness and haste. I wish I could learn to wait on the Lord. Isn't that what it says there, "Wait on the Lord?" David said, "*I would have fainted, if I had not believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*" He says, "*Wait on the Lord, again I say, as David repeated it, wait on the Lord.*"

Time is nothing to God. Let it be nothing to you. The Lord never moves before His time and He is never late in His purposes. "*In the fullness of time, He sent His Son.*" In the fullness of time, He called you. In the fullness of time, He will bless you.

What does this verse say? "*Wait on the Lord, keep His way and He will exalt you to inherit the land.*" You know, when you are reading a book, you start at the first and your hero gets in trouble, serious trouble. He gets out of trouble, and then into more trouble. You don't stop reading. You don't give up because you know that in the back of the book that things are going to turn out all right.



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Our lives are like a tale that is told. We start in here and things develop and things take place. Things are unpleasant sometimes and most difficult. I will tell you this, He who wrote the story, will make it end happily in Christ Jesus. So, why don't you wait on Him? "*Wait on the Lord.*" These are words to live by!