

What Do You Do Till God Comes Through?

A sermon delivered Sunday Morning, March 3, 2013
at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.
by S. Michael Durham
© 2013 Real Truth Matters

Psalm 37:2-7

***Trust in the Lord, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
⁴ Delight yourself also in the Lord,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.
⁵ Commit your way to the Lord,
Trust also in Him,
And He shall bring it to pass.
⁶ He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light,
And your justice as the noonday.
⁷ Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him;
Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,
Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.***

I want to address what we are to do now that we know how much has been promised to the Lord in giving to His work in this church. The answer is our text, but there is one huge obstacle in seeing the vision of God being accomplished. It is the temptation to walk by sight. That is a huge hindrance. It is huge because it is so easy to walk according to the flesh. Don't tell me it isn't so. It's too easy to walk by what you can see and hear rather than by faith in the Word of God. Especially when you're trying to believe God for something He's promised and it's yet to come to pass.

I can believe God when I can see and perceive Him doing something. I can believe God then, but often that is no more than believing what you can see and hear. In other words it's still walking by sight. But can I believe God and trust in Him when I do not perceive His activity? Can you believe God when there is no evidence that He's doing anything on your behalf?

Do you not agree it's often too easy to fall back on the senses, to judge your present by what you presently see or hear?

David knows this experience all too well. That's why he has written this Psalm. He has experienced what it's like to walk by his sight, to go by only what he can see, what his senses told him was true about his circumstances and he lets us in on a journey from the flesh to the faith.

You see, this Psalm is about how to maintain faith when you see the unrighteous prospering and

you don't seem to be prospering. Look at verse one.

*“Do not fret because of evildoers,
Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.”*

Verse seven,

*“Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him;
Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,
Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.”*

This is the problem he wants his readers to overcome. *Don't be concerned and alarmed because you see the unrighteous getting ahead and you seem to be falling behind.* David, all too well, knew this temptation to be discouraged by that circumstance because it had happened to him. We know this because of Psalm 73. So when you take Psalm 73 and Psalm 37 you can see David's journey from flesh to faith. In Psalm 73 he was not so full of faith concerning this problem. He says in verse two,

*“But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled;
My steps had nearly slipped.
For I was envious of the boastful,
When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”*

In other words, David is saying *I almost lost my faith in God completely when I saw wicked people getting ahead and I wasn't. I was serving the Lord but I was not prospering, they were.*

I love the Bible for its remarkable transparency. It doesn't hide the failures of its heroes, it tells you their defeats as well as their triumphs, their sins as well as their obedience and here David confesses, *I almost backslid, I almost lost my way with God over this problem. I couldn't understand, I'm serving God yet I'm not prospering, I'm not advancing, my life doesn't seem to be so successful, why is theirs? Where are you, O God?*

I know many of you have felt that very same thing and it can almost shipwreck you. David even wondered if serving God was worth it. Look at what he says starting in verse thirteen.

*“Did I purify my heart
and wash my hands in innocence for nothing?
For I am afflicted all day long
and punished every morning.
If I had decided to say these things aloud,
I would have betrayed Your people.”*

Isn't that a remarkable statement from the Psalmist? He's asking *did I make a mistake in serving the*

Lord? Have I done all of this for nothing? Is God even real for it seems the more I serve Him the more pain comes into my life. And had I shared this publically I would have turned my back on the church and betrayed them and maybe even led some of them astray. That's where David was in his journey of faith. Perhaps you say you don't understand. Wasn't David full of faith when he faced Goliath in the valley as a young man? Yes, he was. No doubt there was great faith in David's life, but friends, as you are going to learn here this morning, there is more to faith than facing a huge problem. Faith has to mature. Faith has to be challenged in ways in which is not always easy. So it was for David. David had to learn how to move from weak faith to great faith.

It doesn't take a whole lot of faith to face a giant when you know that God has told you to do it. But what about when God is silent? How difficult is it then to maintain faith? David says it's great, it's hard, it's difficult.

All David had was to rely upon what he could understand with his mind and that led him to almost sheer hopelessness.

Look at verse sixteen,

*“When I tried to understand all this,
it seemed hopeless
until I entered God's sanctuary.
Then I understood their destiny.”*

What David needed was divine illumination and one day God gave it to him, He showed him the way of the wicked ends in great destruction. David learned something and you need to learn this as well, that all the heaven unbelievers will get is what they have here on this earth, and all the hell, my dear Christian brother and sister, you will ever experience is what you live on this earth. God showed David that.

Now, in our Psalm, David is an old man and he is reflecting back. I know that he's an old man because he says so in chapter 37 verse 25,

“I have been young, and now am old;”

He's been through this battle of faith and he's overcome. God has given him the ability to overcome and he says,

*“Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken,
Nor his descendants begging bread.
He is ever merciful, and lends;
And his descendants are blessed.
Depart from evil, and do good;
And dwell forevermore.*

*For the Lord loves justice,
And does not forsake His saints;
They are preserved forever,
But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off.”*

David has learned. His faith has been strengthened.

Now beloved, in our situation this first Sunday of March, it would be easy to be pessimistic about our ability to fulfill the vision God has given this church. It would be all too easy to look at the circumstances and to see the shortfall and to say maybe we missed God. Or, all too easy to say this is out of our hands, it's beyond our ability. Or to think that perhaps we need to trim a little bit. Perhaps there was part of the vision we can lay aside. It is all too easy to be pessimistic.

So what do we do?

I want to give you five things out of our text that we are commanded to do, beginning in verse three.

I. TRUST AND OBEY

*“Trust in the Lord, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.”*

True faith obeys. How do you know you have true faith in God? Because you delight in obeying Him. This is not a kind of faith that says there is nothing for me to do because I believe God is going to do it. Faith is not lazy. There is a kind of faith that says God must do it, and we rest in that fact, and we'll talk about that later. But here in verse three, David is determined to prove to us that true faith in God occupies, stays busy, does something.

I think sometimes what we call faith is nothing more than trying to use God. We really don't want to do what God has called us to do, so we say, *I'll pray for that*. Let me give you an example of that—witnessing.

We all know we are to fulfill the Great Commission and make disciples. We all know that we should be willing and ready to share our faith with our coworkers, family, friends, neighbors, loved ones and, yes, even the perfect stranger when God gives us opportunity to share. But often because we are afraid of being rejected or what ever reason, we do not witness and we simply say we'll pray for that person and therefore we use prayer as a cop out.

We use prayer as a means of trying to get God to do what He told us to do. *But pastor, you told us we should spend more time talking to the Person who can change the sinner than with that person.* Yes I have, but I never told you it was at the exclusion of talking to the sinner. Let me say it again, you do well to spend more time in talking to the Lord who can save the sinner, but I have never

said you should never talk to the sinner. You should talk more to the Lord but you should also talk to him or her who needs the Lord.

True faith says: I will do this. I will “trust in the Lord and do good.” I will share my faith. So what are we to do? We are to trust God and now begin to do the good that God has told us we are to do. He has given us ministries, He has given us opportunities and so we trust in Him and we begin to implement His plan and His will for our church and for our individual lives because true faith accepts as well as waits.

It accepts what God gives today even as it waits for the promise of tomorrow. In other words, I receive what God has for me today not overlooking today’s supply and worrying about tomorrow’s supply. He goes on to say, verse three,

“Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.”

Jesus said it this way,

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” (Matthew 6:31-34)

Jesus has said, “Trust Me for today.” So faith accepts God’s gifts here and now while it waits for tomorrow’s provision, tomorrow. This is shepherd terminology here in verse three. The Good Shepherd has already led us to some very green pastures and beautiful still waters, let’s not refuse to eat just because we know greener pastures await us. Let’s feed now and thereby prepare ourselves for the journey to the greener pastures God has for us tomorrow. We are to begin now to do what God has told us to do as a church and you as His child. We do not need to wait for the entire provision to be supplied before we will begin to obey. But walking by sight will, always will wait until all is safe.

When you walk according to the flesh you will always say “I can’t go now because God hasn’t supplied it all now.” I think of Abraham who was told to leave his home place and the Bible says he did not know where he was going. He didn’t know when the sun rose in the morning where God would take him that day, all he knew was that on that day he would obey God. He didn’t know the end point and he didn’t need to know.

I think of the children of Israel when they left Egypt. There is a remarkable lesson. There is so much value in that story. I was thinking about it in this regard, on the very morning of the day after the Passover when Pharaoh gave the command that the children of Israel could leave, what if the elders of Israel came and met with Moses and said, “Wait a minute, we don’t have all of our provisions ready, what are we going to do about water in the wilderness? We may be able to

carry enough for two to three days but it's longer than a two to three day journey to Israel, we need more water."

What would they have said about their sustenance, food? "Moses, we can carry all the grain we can load on our wagons and carts but if we eat all of it, then we'll have nothing to plant our crops when we get to the Promised Land and we can't slaughter our flocks because we'll have none. We need to wait until we have provision—full supply."

If they did that they would still be in slavery today.

Surely we're not a people who needs God to give us absolutely everything we'll ever need before we will obey? Are we? No. Hardly. We have at this moment, as far as we know, unless some others have given promises this morning, a short fall of \$29,470 from fulfilling what we believe God wants us to do. How will that deficit be supplied? My answer to you is I don't know. I don't need to know. I thought about it. I figured this \$29,470 divided by the number of families that are regular attendees of this church would equal \$76 a month. If every family gave \$76 extra a month it would be supplied. Some of you can do that, others of you can't. You have done so much it would be unfair for me to ask you to do this. You have labored in prayer and so many of you have cut your budgets and tightened your belt and have moved into sacrificial giving. For me to come and ask you for \$76 dollars more would be terrible and I won't do that.

It could be made up of several large donations or we could do some kind of money-raising thing, maybe like Barbecue on the River, but listen carefully. No matter how God will do it, we must maintain our faith in God by sacrificial giving and continual prayer and do what He has told us to do. Prayer as well as giving is our trusting in the Lord and doing good. That's what we intend to do and we will stand back and watch God work and be amazed.

One final thing about this verse before I move on to the other four things we are to do until God comes through.

The good must trust.

"Trust in the Lord, and do good;"

We've said that those who trust in the Lord must also do good, but the opposite is also true. Those who do good must also trust in the Lord. What do I mean? It's easy for the flesh once again to raise its ugly head and begin to take credit for what we do for God. It's all too easy for you to begin to become proud in what you have done in your giving to the Lord, in your prayers, in your labors as we fulfill the vision that God gives us so that we begin to look at our own hands and say, "Look what we have done." No! God forbid! Let it never happen Oak Grove! Let us, who do good, maintain faith and do what our Lord taught us to do: "So likewise, when you have done all the things you are commanded to do say, 'We are unprofitable servants, we have done what was our duty to do.'"

II. ENJOY THE LORD

*“Delight yourself also in the Lord,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.”*

Some of us walk on a slant. Did you know that? I saw a TV commercial sometime ago where people were walking on a slant. Spiritually that is so for most of us. The ballast is not in the boat. When the ballast, or weight, is not in the boat properly the boat can lean one way or the other. Human nature has the tendency to do the same and lean toward the extreme. I'm so glad the pendulum in many of the reformed circles I have fellowship with have swung from a duty-filled service to a joy-filled service.

Men like John Piper and his Christian hedonism has had an affect and I am thankful for that. What is Christian hedonism? It's simply that the greatest way to glorify God is by enjoying God and the belief that a duty-based service is dishonoring to Him. We serve Him because we love Him and we desire Him—He is the treasure of the heart.

I am very thankful for the embracing of those biblical beliefs, yet over the years I have discovered that many people may be able to cite “Desiring God” or “The Pleasures of God” or some other book that talks about this Christ-centered, enjoying-God mentality so that it's nothing more than a system of theology for them. They can quote the words, they can cite the verses, but their lives are just as miserable as anybody else's. What David's talking about here in verse four goes beyond theology or systems, this is the language of the heart. This is not learning certain verses or how to put these verses together and say, *Here's the Christian life, enjoy God*. “Love God and do whatever you please,” as Augustine said. Well, that's a great slogan, I like it, but it's more than just something my head can recite. What David is saying is something my heart can experience.

What does it mean to delight yourself in the Lord? To help your heart, this is what I suggest: All you should do is remember how your heart felt when you first were saved from your sins and became a child of God and you'll know exactly what David means when he says “delight in the Lord”. Nobody had to command you then to delight in God, you just did. Perhaps there was some misguided older Christian who came along and tried to steal your joy, “Now calm down, calm down, you'll get over this eventually.” Oh, I despise those words. They got over it and shame on them, now they have to be commanded to delight in the Lord. They have to be told to enjoy God.

To delight in the Lord is a longing of the soul. It's a longing that Christ becomes more to you than your finances, your family, your wife or your husband, you long for Christ more than even the experience of gathering with the saints. Jesus becomes the very passion of the heart and its affections. You can't get enough. He is that longing of the soul and the water that satisfies.

Oh would God help this church and churches across this nation again to fall in love with Jesus. This is the great need of the hour, not more sermons. Yet I must continue to preach them as

I'm commanded to. But if you want to know what my goal is when preaching it's not only to fill your head with more information. Some mistakenly think that's what my purpose is, oh no. I have to get through the mind gate to get to the heart. It's truth that leads us to an experience with Christ, there are never experiences with Him apart from truth. But the mind is not the end, the goal for which I preach.

Years ago when I first came here many people didn't understand the preaching because it was a little different than what they were used to. One day when Karen and I were with Randall and Martha, she turned to me and said, "I think I understand what you're trying to do. You're trying to get to our hearts, because if we get the heart right everything else will fall into place."

Yes! That's always my aim when I preach. I don't want you leaving here just scholars; I want you to leave here scholars on fire with an experience with God. I want you to leave here knowing the Truth and the Truth setting you free. You can know the truth with the mind only and still be enslaved.

The most important thing is not reaching our budget goal or launching Romania Missionary Fellowship, or sending Paul and Velda to Africa. No, the most important thing for this church is to treasure Jesus Christ above all things including our ministries. If we fulfill this vision God has given us for 2013 for any reason other than treasuring Christ, then everything we do is in vain. We must enjoy God.

OK, We're short \$30,000, so what? That shouldn't stop me from enjoying Jesus who has it all anyway. It would be a foolish mistake if we started to try to court wealthy people because they have some money. The only person you need to get close to is Jesus. He's got it all. You want to court a wealthy person, court Him.

III. COMMIT TO TRUST THE LORD

*"Commit your way to the Lord,
Trust also in Him,
And He shall bring it to pass."*

Commitment is trusting and to trust we must commit. So what is David saying here? Isn't he kind of being redundant?

*"Commit your way to the Lord,
Trust also in Him,"*

Isn't that the same thing? In one sense of the word it is, but David is not speaking of the definition of faith here. David is showing us faith at its highest level, which means the words *trust* and *commitment* are now being used differently.

There are at least four levels or degrees of trusting God that I have discovered in my life. There may be more, I'm just telling you what I've found so far and what I've found Scripture substantiating.

The lowest level of faith is when God speaks directly to you and you know that you know what God said.

“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God,” (Romans 10:17)

That's the **lowest kind of faith** there is. It is conversion, for example. It's the faith of a new believer. He's heard God by the Spirit in his soul and it's regenerated, given new life, and brought him alive out of his sins and trespasses and he believes it. That's not great faith. It's faith but not great faith.

The **next level** is when you have a promise of Scripture about a specific circumstance and you trust the promise. God's not spoken directly to you, you just have the Book and the Book says this is what you should expect and you believe that. That is, I think, a higher degree of faith than believing what God said directly. Let me give you an example, Matthew 6:30,

“If God so clothes the grass of the field which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not more clothe you, O you of little faith.”

In other words, God said He would provide financially for you and not to worry about today's needs because He will supply. That's a promise. God may not have spoken directly to your soul but in one sense He has to all of us through this written word and we put our confidence in it.

The **third level** is when there is no promise of Scripture and no word from heaven and all you have is the integrity of God.

You don't know what God's will is, therefore you have to commit yourself to God's goodness and there remain. That is a higher degree of faith. I've been there a lot of times. One example was when Victoria was born. We didn't know what God's will for her was. We prayed, *God, if you take her from us you are good, if You leave her with us You are good.* That was my prayer as I knelt beside the delivery bed with Karen that morning. All we had was God's integrity—“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” That verse was so clear to me, so real that I felt buoyant, lifted up.

The **highest level** of faith to me occurs when circumstances appear that God is not keeping His promises. The very thing He's promised is not only not coming to pass, but everything contrary to it is happening. When everything you see, you hear, you feel, screams and God is silent. To be able to maintain faith in that kind of storm I think is the greatest faith.

This is what David is telling us here. There is a degree of faith that simply says I'm committing myself to God whether I survive or I perish, whether I live or if I die, whether I fail or am suc-

cessful, I am trusting in the Lord.

Commit your way to the Lord in Hebrew literally means *roll over your way to the Lord*. Your **way**, not your burden, your way, your life. Roll it over to the Lord and trust in Him. In the end do you know what David is really saying? He's saying what the old hymn of Horatius Bonar said,

*“Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be;
O lead me by thine own right hand,
Choose out the path for me.”*

*“Smooth let it be or rough,
It will be still the best;
Winding or straight, it matters not,
It leads me to thy rest.”*

*“I dare not choose my lot,
I would not if I might;
But choose Thou for me, O my God,
So shall I walk aright.”*

*“Take thou my cup, and it
With joy or sorrow fill;
As ever best to thee may seem,
Choose thou my good and ill.”*

It is trust when you can hand God your life like a cup and say, *Whatever You put in that I will accept because I believe it will be best*. That's what you're to do and it's that kind of faith that God will act and respond to.

Look at verse five again,

*“Commit your way to the Lord,
Trust also in Him,
And He shall bring it to pass.”*

End of story. There is nothing more to be said. It shall be done.

Beloved, I know we have a shortfall and I know most of you, if not all of you, are giving sacrificially. You've entered into that realm. Let us continue to commit our way to God and trust Him—He will bring this to pass.

Just as I wrote in your bulletin, stand still and let's now watch the salvation of God.

Psalm 37:6,

*“He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light,
And your justice as the noonday.”*

God will vindicate us if we commit our way to Him and trust Him.

It's a terrible life to live as a Christian trying to keep God from looking like a liar. That is a miserable, miserable life. God says He'll bring it to pass and you can trust in Him, just commit your way, continue to do good, enjoy the Lord. Commit your way.

IV. REST

Psalm 37:7,

“Rest in the Lord,”

Americans don't like to rest and they don't like to be quiet. We go to sleep with music playing or TVs on, and many today can't enter into the realm of the self-conscious without drugs. Four billion dollars a year are spent on sleep aids in America just to find that elusive good night's sleep. And you know why most Americans are sleep deprived? The majority is due to stress and anxiety. Some kind of anxiety reduces the body's ability to sleep. It was the primary reason why people have sleep problems.

But the same is true with our spirits. Stress and anxiety leads to our inability to rest in the Lord. You cannot have a calm spirit if you're anxious about something. We find it difficult to sit before the Lord and just be silent. When was the last time you went into your prayer closet to say nothing but just to be quiet before God? See what I mean?

I think this will help many of you. Thinking is the devil's play. Our much thinking is his playground. Thoughts give rise to rankle and rankle gives rise to a complaining spirit that sees only trouble and is blind to God and His good providence. So much so that your prayer life becomes a breeding ground for worry and complaint because the more you pray about the problem the more you think about it. Some of you need to stop praying about your problems and start praising God who can bring it to pass and deliver you in His good time and good way. Satan has you praying and your prayers have got you stirred up because all you do is stew rather than praise.

So what is resting in God? Well a Scottish Presbyterian minister, James Burns, answered it this way:

“It is but the instinctive movement and upward glance at the Spirit of God.”

In other words, you learn how to keep your focus on God.

“Your soul, your heart, your mind, the calm fighting of all of one’s grief and fears to Him and feeling strengthened, patient, hopeful in the act of doing so.”

In other words, just coming to God with the problem lifts my soul and I feel strength in just being able to tell Him and leave it with Him. That’s what he’s saying. That’s rest.

“It implies a willingness that He should choose for us a conviction that the ordering of all the things that concern us is safer in His hands than in our own.”

A confident belief in that is what it means to rest. It doesn’t mean to chill out or do nothing and get lazy—it means to trust.

V. PATIENTLY WAIT

What are you to do until God comes through? Patiently wait. Waiting implies that God does not always answer immediately, nor does He give us all we need at the moment we begin to sense or see our need. If I tell you to need to wait on me that means it’s not going to happen instantly. You’re going to have to take a delay and be happy with that. Sooner or later I will arrive. That’s what patience is. While we wait on God what are we to do? All the other things we’ve told to do.

Trust and obey
Enjoy God
Commit yourself to God
Rest
Patiently Wait

We cannot afford to be like Israel who would not rest or wait for God. They doubted His goodness and His plan for them. I’m almost done reading Numbers again and sometimes I’ve actually started to weep as I saw the unbelief of these people who were God’s chosen people. To be quite frank, I just get perplexed at their unbelief. God just killed 250 of you Israelites with fire coming down from heaven because you spoke evil of God and the next week you’re doing it again. It doesn’t make sense. You would think people would learn, it’s not safe to complain against God. At one point in their journey God complains to Moses and says, “Ten times they have tested Me.” That’s just after one year in the wilderness.

We can’t be like this. I know this vision looks impossible to some of us. I know there are the doubters who would say, *There you go again just dreaming. It’s all a dream, a wish, a want, a hope so.* Look at Deuteronomy 8 and I will conclude with this.

God loves His people enough to test them and I am resolved this is what God is doing now.

I harken you back to a statement I made just a few weeks ago when we began to share the vision and the budget and you all began to be so excited as you saw the possibility, do you not remember what I said? I said, "I'm starting to get a little afraid because it's starting to look easy. It's starting to look doable." I wasn't jesting. My heart really began to have a sense of fear. *God, are you really in this? Because God if you're really in it there will be a test of faith.* So here it is, and I'm confident this is God.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3

"And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD."

Friends, you should not live by the bread you put into this offering plate every Sunday. This church, may it be so, lives by the Word of God. What do you do until God comes through? Trust and obey, enjoy Him, commit your way to Him, rest in Him and then wait patiently. Amen.