

Psalm 37

[A Psalm] of David.

Psalm 37: The psalm is written in the form of an acrostic, although our numbering is out of step with the Hebrew. There is no logical outline to the psalm, so it is best studied according to its topics. The major point of the psalm seems to be that the wicked's prosperity is short-lived. Though David was troubled by the prosperity of the unrighteous, he knew by faith that their undeserved bounty would be cut off. His underlying belief is that God will intervene in His time. Then the present, temporary reversal of fortunes will be set right and the righteous "shall inherit the earth" (verses 9, 11, 22, 29, 34). The mention of inheriting the earth would be encouraging and uplifting to the pious Israelite since all of God's blessing was connected with the Promised Land. In contrast to this blessed destiny the wicked "shall be cut off", an expression used often in the Old Testament of a violent death. The psalm also contains a simple formula for achieving peace of mind in the face of the wicked's prosperity: "fret not ... neither be thou envious" (verse 1), "trust ... do good" (verse 3), "delight thyself also in the Lord" (verse 4), "commit thy way ... trust" (verse 5), "rest ... wait patiently ... fret not" (verse 7), "cease from anger ... forsake wrath ... fret not" (verse 8). All of these exhortations urge the believer to confidently trust the Lord with all of life's problems. The psalm concludes appropriately with an undying affirmation of faith and trust in the unchanging character of God.

Verses 1-40: (Psalm 37), an irregular acrostic, is a wisdom poem addressed to man, not God. (Verses 12-24), sound very much like the maxims of Proverbs. The covenant promises of the "land" for Israel are prominent in its verses (compare verses 3, 9, 11, 22, 29, 34). Its basic theme deals with the age-old question "Why do the ungodly prosper while the godly painfully struggle through life?" An intricate arrangement puts forth David's answer. (In Psalm 37), David mixes and matches 6 thoughts in order to advance his major message on the eventual arrival of divine justice.

- I. An Introductory Overview (37:1-2).
- II. An Initial Expansion (37:3-11).
- III. Some Proverbial Perspectives (37:12-24).
- IV. An Initial Testimony (37:25-26).
- V. A Final Expansion (compare verses 3-11 with 37:27-34).
- VI. A Final Testimony (compare verses 25-26 with 37:35-40).

Psalm 37:1 "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity."

The saints may be grieved at them and for them, because of their evil doings, and may be angry with them for them. Yet are not to show any undue warmth. At least in an indecent way, by calling them derogatory names. For the words may be rendered, "do not show thyself warm" or

"angry": in a sinful way. Or fret not at their outward prosperity, as it is explained (Psalm 37:7). The Targum adds, "to be like them", which agrees with (Psalm 37:8).

"Neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity": Envy is not a natural passion. To envy the evil-doers on account of their prosperity is at once a folly and a danger. Their position is really not enviable. And, if we allow ourselves to envy them, we shall be tempted to follow their example (see Prov. 24:1).

To envy anyone would be to say that we would like to trade places with them. You can see how wrong this would be. Sometimes it seems that that evil people are better off financially than the people who are living for God. We must be careful not to covet things that others have, even if they did get their possessions in an evil way. We should let God take care of them and just try to keep our own affairs in shape.

Psalm 37:2 "For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb."

Here-today-gone-tomorrow illustrations about the wicked characterize this psalm. On this theme (compare Job 14:1-2; Psalms 90:5-6; 103:15-16; Isa. 40:6-8; Matt. 6:30; James 1:10-11; 1 John 2:17).

The only pleasures the evil will have is in this life, because they are destined for an eternity in hell. The grass and the green herb are here today and gone tomorrow.

Psalm 37:3 "Trust in the LORD, and do good; [so] shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

Trust in the Lord, and do good. Notwithstanding any difficulty which the prosperity of the wicked causes thee, trust thou still in the Lord. Be sure that his providence watches over thee, and endeavor still to serve him by "doing good." Trust in God grows when a believer's life and soul "be fed" on His faithfulness in times past.

"So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed": Rather, dwell in the land, and feed on faithfulness; I.e. remain where thou art, and be satisfied with the thought of God's faithfulness. Feed on this.

We should stop looking to others' affairs and just start operating in faith. The evil man has no reward stored up for heaven. The only thing he has, is this world. Look with me at the wonderful things God has in store for those who believe.

1 Corinthians 2:9 "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Not only does God have wonderful preparations made for us in heaven, but He takes care of our needs here on the earth, as well.

Matthew 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Psalm 37:4 "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

In the persons in God, Father, Son, and Spirit. In the perfections of God, his power, goodness, faithfulness, wisdom, love, grace, and mercy. In his works of creation, providence, and redemption. In his word, his Gospel, the truths and ordinances of it. In his house, and the worship of it. And in his people, the excellent in the earth, in whom was all the delight of the psalmist. And each of these afford a field of delight and pleasure, to attend unto, contemplate, and meditate upon.

"And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart": Such as are according to the will of God, and for the good of his people. Such as relate to communion with him, and to the communication of more grace from him. And to the enjoyment of eternal glory.

The most beautiful verse in the Bible to me, that says this same thing is:

John 15:7 "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

The key to this is abide. If we are hid in Christ and He is uppermost in our thoughts and deeds, then He will give us the desires of our heart. We will not want things that would not be in His will to give us. The desire of our heart would be to do His will. All through the Bible, we see blessings abundant, if we are obedient to His Word. If we do not obey His Word there are curses abundant. The blessings depend on us lining our will up with the will of God.

Psalm 37:5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring [it] to pass.

"Commit means to take the whole of one's life and give it to God (Prov. 16:3). The New Testament counterpart is to cast all care on Him (1 Peter 5:7).

This again, is speaking of turning our will over to the will of God. We must make Jesus Lord of our life as well as our Savior, and He will bring it to pass.

Psalm 37:6 "And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

If the prosperity of the wicked frets thee, because it seems to obscure thy righteousness. Since while he appears to bask in the sunshine of God's favor, thy life is possibly overshadowed by clouds and darkness. Be sure that, in the end, this seeming injustice will be remedied. God will not frown on thee always. One day he will turn on thee the light of his countenance, and make thy righteousness to shine forth like the sun in its noonday splendor.

Righteousness is a gift from God. Notice, (He shall bring forth thy righteousness). If the righteousness that we had on our own was good enough, then we would not have needed Him to bring righteousness. Our righteousness, that we had before, was as filthy rags. Praise God! He clothed us in His righteousness when we accepted Jesus as our Savior. He took our sin and gave us His righteousness. When we are saved, we take the Light of the world into our body. His Light shines in us and through us. There will be no negative judgement of the man who takes Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord.

Verses 7-8: The message of "Relax! Don't react!" returns (compare verse 1).

Psalm 37:7 "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."

Hebrew. Be silent unto, or for, or because of the Lord. I.e. do not murmur nor fret at his dealings, but silently and quietly submit to his will, and adore his judgments. And, as it follows, wait for his help. This advice and command is pressed again and again, to teach us how hard it is to learn and practice this lesson.

"And wait patiently for him": Be content to await his time, which is sure to be the right time. Meanwhile possess your soul in patience.

"Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way": Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass; this explains the sense of (Psalm 37:1). It being often an additional uneasiness to the people of God under affliction. When they observe the prosperity of men that go on in a sinful way, and have all or more than heart can wish. And whatever they contrive and devise, though wicked and criminal.

"Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass": Because the man is allowed to accomplish his purposes of wickedness, or is not arrested at once in his schemes of guilt.

Paul made a statement that should be the statement of all who are followers of Jesus.

Philippians 4:11 "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, [therewith] to be content."

Paul had discovered the peace that comes from total trust of the Lord. When a Christian can get to this point of not worrying regardless of whether they are rich or poor, then they can rest in the Lord. We should not have wandering eyes, looking at the state of others. We should be content in the Lord knowing that whatever is happening to us at the moment is for our good, if we have put our trust in the Lord.

Psalm 37:8 "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil."

The Hebrew word translated “fret” is *charah*, which speaks of “growing warm and blazing up;”. To fret or worry is to be concerned with things over which one has no control or ability to change. That kind of worry, according to Scripture, is sin.

Sometimes the Lord allows us to see these things that those who are not believers have to see how we will react to it. Tribulations come to make us strong. Problems that loom up that might anger us, are perhaps a test to see if we have grown out of anger and wrath. If we fail the test and lose our temper and get angry, then we will possibly face another very similar situation, until we learn to rise above it and not sin. We are not perfect when the Lord saves us. He lets problems arise, so that we can grow to depend totally on Him in every situation.

Psalm 37:9 For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

Though they flourish for a while, they shall be cut down like the grass or flower of the field. Or they shall be cut off as branches from a flourishing tree. They shall be cut off from the earth, and rooted out of it by death or some desolating judgment (see Prov. 2:22). And therefore not to be envied and fretted at.

"But those that wait upon the Lord shall inherit the earth": According to God's promise, often made to such; which also generally was literally fulfilled in that state of the church. And if in any instances it was not, it was fulfilled with far greater advantage in spiritual and eternal blessings.

Matthew 5:5 "Blessed [are] the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

When a Christian dies to this world, they step through a door to a better life. The evildoers are not so. When an evil person dies, they are headed for a life of torment in hell. Possibly the inheriting of the earth is speaking of the thousand-year reign of Jesus on the earth when the Christians will reign with Him.

Psalm 37:10 "For yet a little while, and the wicked [shall] not [be]: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it [shall] not [be]."

“Yet a little while”: Compare similar terminology (in Jer. 51:33; Hosea 1:4). The Lord's intervention is imminent.

Life, as we know it now on the earth, is like a vapor. It is here for a moment in time and then gone. This 70 years, or perhaps even up to 100 years that we live in this life, is over so quickly. The only life worth having is one that prepares us for all eternity with Jesus. The wicked will not be in heaven with the believers in Christ. It will be as if they had never been to us.

Psalm 37:11 "But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."

I.e. the godly, who are frequently thus called (as Psalms 22:26 149:4). Those who patiently bear God's afflicting hand, and meekly pass by injuries from ungodly men. The abundance of peace;

partly of outward peace and prosperity, which God in his due time will give them. And principally of inward peace and satisfaction of mind, in the sense of God's favor, and the assurance of his own endless happiness. Jesus quoted this verse in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:5).

"And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace": Of spiritual peace enjoyed in a way of believing, arising from a comfortable view of interest in the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ. And of all happiness and prosperity in the kingdom of Christ here on earth, at which time there will be abundance of peace (Psalm 72:7). Or of eternal peace in the world to come, which will be a state of uninterrupted and unspeakable peace (see Psalm 37:37). All which afford inconceivable delight and pleasure. And therefore, such have no need to fret and be envious at the fading happiness of wicked men.

There will be peace, because the King of Peace, Jesus Christ, will be with them. This too, is speaking of the thousand-year millennial reign of Jesus on the earth.

Psalm 37:12 "The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth."

The wicked plotteth against the just": Here is a rooted enmity in the seed of the wicked one against the righteous seed. Their aim is, if they can, to destroy their righteousness. If that fails, then to destroy them, to this end they plot or act with a great deal of policy and contrivance.

"And gnasheth upon him with his teeth": Which expresses his malice and hatred, as David's enemies did upon him (Psalm 35:16; and Stephen's in Acts 7:54).

The sons of the flesh and the sons of the spirit have always been opposed to each other.

Genesis 3:15 "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The devil and all of his followers, have always tried to destroy those who chose to follow the Lord. The wicked are not satisfied that they are lost, but are constantly trying to get Christians to follow the devil too.

Psalm 37:13 "The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming."

"The Lord shall laugh at him": Have him and his plots in derision, confound his schemes, and disappoint him of his designs. Bring him into calamity, and laugh at it (see Psalm 2:4).

"For he seeth that his day is coming": The day of his destruction or overthrow. He sees that the wicked man cannot be ultimately successful, but that destruction is coming upon him. There is nothing ultimately to be apprehended from his designs, for his overthrow is certain.

There is a day when the wicked of this earth will be cast into outer darkness with the devil and his angels. Notice, in the next verse that, the unbelievers are cast out with the devil and his angels.

Matthew 25:41 "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:"

Now, let's look where the devil and angels were cast.

Revelation 20:10 "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet [are], and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

Psalm 37 Questions

1. What are you really saying when you envy someone?
2. Instead of worrying about what others have, what should we do?
3. The evil shall be cut down like what?
4. Why should an evil person get all the happiness they can in this world?
5. Seek ye first the _____ _ _ _ _.
6. If ye _____ in me, and my _____ in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.
7. We receive blessings from God, if we do what?
8. If we disobey God, what can we expect?
9. What should we make Jesus in our life, besides our Savior?
10. Righteousness is a _____ from God.
11. When does Jesus clothe the Christian in His righteousness?
12. There will be no negative judgement of whom?
13. What was the statement Paul made in Philippians, that all believers should do?
14. In verse 8 of this lesson, we are told to cease_____.
15. If we are tested and fail the test, what happens to us?
16. Life on this earth, as we know it, is like a _____.
17. Who shall inherit the earth?
18. When will there be peace on the earth?

19. What lesson can we learn from Genesis 3:15?

20. Who will be thrown into the lake of fire?