

PSALMS 37

This Psalm was likely written near the same time as Psalm 36. It is an alphabetical Psalm: in somewhat broken order, the first letters of the verses follow the Hebrew alphabet – apparently some letters have two verses. The Psalm is characterized by vivid contrasts between good and evil, between the righteous and the wicked. The first six verses appear to be introductory to the verses that follow. As typically translated, the first six verses appear to give exhortations and results or rewards for following the exhortations. It is also possible to read these verses as entirely exhortations.

EXHORTATION - DO'S AND DON'T'S (Verses 1-6)

{37:1} Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; {2} for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.

Anger and anxiety has probably killed more people than cigarettes and automobiles, and atomic bombs all together. We get so worked up about things that are not "fair" in our perspective. The guy who cheats in business and never goes to church, the one who curses and lies every breath seems to never get sick, has a big fine house and a fancy car. On the other hand, someone else is totally honest, supports the church, and is true to his word may be just getting by and can barely afford to pay rent and has to walk every where he goes. We look at that contrast and think, "It's just not fair." How can we judge that it is not fair? The final scores have not been posted. Godly advice is for us to not get "worked up" (fret) about it and certainly don't think about swapping places (envy) with those who sin so you might participate in what appears to be prosperity. The truth is that it will not be long before they will come to an end and be cut off. Such appearances of prosperity are not permanent but there is permanence for those who put their trust in God.

{3} Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. {4} Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.

The idea of trusting in God for everything is very difficult for us to do. We want to be in control. We try to hold on to what we can see and, in effect, we put our trust in ourselves and the material possessions we have. It seems that the more we have the less we trust God and the more we put our confidence in what we have. Even those who do not have much can look at the ungodly and see them gaining material things and they, too, can end up putting their trust in "things" and not in God.

There is a progression here in these verses. The first step is "stop being angry or incensed", the second is to "trust God", and the next is to "do good" and then to "delight in God". It is possible (and maybe quite common) for people to obey God and resent doing it. There are people who feel that "being a Christian" restricts them from having fun in life. Real trust will be rewarded by joy and a change of attitude that comes from a realization that what God wants for us is really best for us. When we realize we are the children of God and we are heirs of the Kingdom of God, then we can have a sense of ownership in what He is doing in the world and, more specifically, in our lives. In Psalms 16, David observes, "At Thy right hand, there are pleasures for evermore." As we see what God does is right and good, then we are transformed in our thinking as to what we want to see happen (God will give us the [right] desires for our heart). Our values change, our desires are altered and we start agreeing with God as to what is important. When God's will and our will become the same (when we give our desires over to Him), then He has no problem giving us the desires of our heart.

Additionally, we are "dwell in" or occupy the land. The KJV reads as if dwelling in the land is a result or reward of trusting in the Lord and doing good. We can enthusiastically embrace this idea (the meek shall inherit the earth), we can also see this statement as a call to action and involvement and to have a positive influence in the area in which we live. The next phrase in the KJV read "and verily, thou shalt be fed." Again, we can embrace this idea (the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want), we can also render this phrase as "feed on the truth." This calls for action on our part in being careful of what we take in to minds and our hearts.

{5} Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: {6} He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.

The next step [after we stop fretting, after we trust, and after we delight, etc.] is to commit what we do to God. The word translated "commit" carries with it the idea of rolling around or wallowing. Many people wallowing in the ways of the world and get it all over them. On the other hand, we are to roll around and get wrapped up in the ways of the Lord. We are not to take the attitude "if I am trusting in God, then I will just sit here and do nothing." We should be active and doing. Someone once said it difficult to steer a ship that is not moving. The key is for us to dedicate whatever we do to God for Him to use so His purposes can be accomplished. We simply trust Him to make it happen. So often, the world will think something is wrong with us if we are not trying to "score points" according to the world system. Given enough time, the wisdom of doing things God's way will be shown to be right. There will be a time (either in history or in eternity) when those who put their trust in the Lord will be vindicated and be shown to be right. We do not have to prove to the world the rightness of walking according the precept of God - it will eventually shine forth like the dawn and the noon day sun.

Contrast in the Outcome of the Righteous and the Wicked.

{7} Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

After we trust in the Lord and commit our ways to God, then the next step in the progression is to "rest" in the Lord. When we rest in the Lord we cease our own labors and striving and we wait for God to initiate action in us and for us. As an example of resting in the Lord, in Acts 8:26, Philip was told by God to go down to Gaza. You know the story, Philip met the Ethiopian and led him to Jesus. Isaiah reminds us to wait upon God: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. If we are waiting upon God, then we certainly have no room in our lives to worry about what someone else is doing or getting away with.

{8} Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret--it leads only to evil.

We may get caught up in worrying about others who break the rules and seem to get ahead. It can make us angry and we may even be led us to take matter into our own hands to "correct" the situation. That's not our job! God knows what is happening and He will take care of those kinds of things in His timing. We need to be preparing to rule the earth. We need to be developing Christ-like character so we are able to rule with Him. One day, as God's children, we shall inherit the earth.

{9} For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land. {10} A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found.

One day God will correct all that seems to be injustice. The actual score card will be shown and we will know who the real winners are. The wicked are not going to be included in God's blessing--there will not be a place for the wicked. Nearly everyone is talking about the possibility of peace with all the disarmament talks and the seeming demise of communism of several years ago. However, there will be something else that will withhold peace as long as there are ungodly people around.

{11} But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace.

When the redeemed are the only inhabitants and they are indwelt by the Prince of Peace, then the world will know real peace. When that happens, it shall be something we can revel in and enjoy. In the game of life, are we keeping score with the official rules or are we like the guy who thinks that the one with the most toys wins? When the final whistle blows and the game is over, we don't need any surprises as to our eligibility to play. If we have not accepted Jesus as Lord of our lives, then we are not even eligible. It will be too late then to do what is right.

{12} The wicked plot against the righteous and gnash their teeth at them; {13} but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming. {14} The wicked draw the sword and bend the bow to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose ways are upright. {15} But their swords will pierce their own hearts, and their bows will be broken. {16} Better the little that the righteous have than the wealth of many wicked; {17} for the power of the wicked will be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous.

We tend to worry about the apparent success of the ungodly; however, God is not worried. He knows the outcome and as we read God word, we can also know the outcome. God's promises give us

hope in the midst of troubles and in our situations of need. The righteous will be vindicated and the wicked will be punished.

{18} The days of the blameless are known to the LORD, and their inheritance will endure forever. {19} In times of disaster they will not wither; in days of famine they will enjoy plenty. {20} But the wicked will perish: The Lord's enemies will be like the beauty of the fields, they will vanish--vanish like smoke.

The contrast of how God deals with the righteous and the wicked is clear. God rewards those who trust in Him with eternal values and eternal life. Those who oppose God may seem to do well but their success is only temporal and fleeting. Since their substance has no foundation it does not survive in times of trouble.

Contrast in the Action or Lifestyle of the Righteous and the Wicked

{21} The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously; {22} those the LORD blesses will inherit the land, but those he curses will be cut off.

The way people deal with each other is a reflection of their basic nature. Greed makes us think only of ourselves and generosity causes us to think of others. God sees our behavior toward each other and He treats us as we treat others.

{23} If the LORD delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; {24} though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand. {25} I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. {26} They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed.

The attitude of heart that would cause us to always be generous and lend freely comes from a realization that "freely we have received, freely we should give." We are to be channels of God's blessings. As we allow God to bless others through us, He is pleased and we benefit from His presence and the overflow of the blessings He send through us.

{27} Turn from evil and do good; then you will dwell in the land forever. {28} For the LORD loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever, but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off; {29} the righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever.

If we know the basic nature of God and know what pleases Him, then we should readily adopt His ways. Indeed, if Jesus lives in us and we have surrendered our wills to His, then we will do good in our lives. Since Christ is the Inheritor of all things, then we (being in Christ) will be co-heirs with Him.

{30} The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just. {31} The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip.

Any wisdom we have is a result of the presence of the Holy Spirit helping us apply the word of God to everyday situations we encounter.

{32} The wicked lie in wait for the righteous, seeking their very lives; {33} but the LORD will not leave them in their power or let them be condemned when brought to trial.

From the very beginning (starting with Cain who was envious of Abel) and continuing until today, those who follow God's ways will be persecuted by those who are rebellious. But God will vindicate those who trust in Him.

{34} Wait for the LORD and keep his way. He will exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you will see it. {35} I have seen a wicked and ruthless man flourishing like a green tree in its native soil, {36} but he soon passed away and was no more; though I looked for him, he could not be found.

Vindication of the righteous does not happen on a situation by situation basis. We may have to wait many years to see justice prevail. In some cases, justice may not be seen until Judgment Day.

{37} Consider the blameless, observe the upright; there is a future for the man of peace. {38} But all sinners will be destroyed; the future of the wicked will be cut off.

Instead of us looking at the temporary "success" of the wicked and lamenting about how unfair it is, we should be watching how God blesses those who trust in Him. If we are going to learn anything from the ungodly, then we may have to look beyond the temporary into eternity.

{39} The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble. {40} The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.

For the Christian, all successes we have, all victories over problems, and all deliverances from danger are a result of being in Christ. For the non-Christian, any success, any victory over problems, and any deliverance from danger are a result of the grace of God that is designed to draw them to God.