

## Selected Psalms - Psalm 37

Psalm 37 is one of the best-loved of David's Psalms. Its purpose is to teach the righteous how to live in a world filled with wickedness, and how to live among those who hate God. The Psalm contains seven admonitions on how to achieve tranquility and peace of mind under these conditions.

The first admonition begins in verses one and two: "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."

Because the wicked seem to prosper in this world, the natural reaction from the righteous is to become incensed, or to become envious of their success. But they are reminded that success by the wicked is short-lived, and they will come to a distressful end. The Bible states: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3:8). "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away" (1 Pet. 1:24). "For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways" (Jas. 1:11).

The second admonition is found in verse three: "Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

Rather than becoming incensed because of the wicked, it is far better to look beyond the present circumstances by trusting in God and continuing to do good. By this means the righteous are assured security and sustenance. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name . . ." (Heb. 6:10). When one trusts in the Lord, His promise is to give what one longs for—the desires of the heart. Elsewhere we are admonished: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5). Trusting in our own understanding can lead to irreparable damage to ourselves and others. Trusting in the Lord is emphasized in Jeremiah 17:7-8: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be [afraid] in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

We find the third admonition in verse five: "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."

The counsel here is that one should rely on God to carry life's burdens, as the word "way" means to "roll your way upon the Lord." The meaning is to remove the burdens from our shoulders and place them upon the shoulders of God. God should be relied upon for whatever one undertakes in life. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:6-7). What is the promise if one does this? "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Ps. 55:22). "And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday" (Ps. 37:6).

The fourth admonition is recorded in verse seven: "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."

## Bethel Church of God

Selected Psalms &#8211; Psalm 37

Since we have already seen in this Psalm the need to avoid fretting, the admonition in this verse is to rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Christ said: "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19). Patience is a godly virtue. A manifestation of patience is learning to keep silent. It is too easy to speak with unwise passion and bring discredit upon oneself or God.

Because it is closely related to the fourth one (verse eight), the fifth admonition gives us: "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil."

How often we are told to avoid fretting that leads to anger, thereby causing much evil. The New King James Version translates the latter part of this verse as: ". . . Do not fret-it only causes harm." And indeed it does. How often do people react to situations emotionally and then later have sore regrets for the damage that has been done? We need not take matters regarding evil into our own hands. God promises to provide justice for the iniquity that is done under the sun. "For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Ps. 37:9-11).

The Lord sees the works and machinations of the wicked: "The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken" (Ps. 37:12-15). The righteous should be patient and trust in the Lord. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous" (vv. 16-17).

Notice the contrast between the reward of the righteous and of the wicked.

The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away. The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth. For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off. (Ps. 37:18-22)

God promises over and over to help the righteous. Can we have confidence in His promises? "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed" (Ps. 37:23-26).

The sixth admonition begins in verse 27: "Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. For the LORD loveth judgment, (justice, what is right) and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off" (vv. 27-28).

The admonition here is to depart from evil and do good instead, thereby insuring a long life. David certainly recognized the negative side of human nature, as this Psalm dwells on this aspect repeatedly. The benefit of departing from evil is God's approval, and the promise not to be forsaken in time of need. Those who practice evil cannot expect God's intervention when it is needed. How many times in the Scriptures do we see God standing up for the righteous and forsaking the wicked? Yet, the promise given in verse 27 is much more profound than just in this present life. By the words "dwell for evermore," it is the promise of eternal life!

## Bethel Church of God

Selected Psalms &#8211; Psalm 37

Again, in the following verses we see the contrast between the deeds of the righteous and of the wicked, and the promise for deliverance for the righteous: “The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged” (Ps. 37:29-33).

The promise is that the Lord will not allow the wicked to fulfill their plans to destroy the righteous. Even more important, the righteous man—the man who departs from evil—will not be condemned in the judgment!

The seventh and final admonition in this psalm is found in verse 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.”

If there was ever a requirement to receive the promises of God, it is being patient and constantly obeying His Law. We are told in the New Testament: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (Jas. 1:2-4).

In contrast what will the righteous observe? The prophet Malachi wrote:

For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch . . . . And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts. (Mal. 4:1-3)

Based on the observations he had witnessed in his long life, David confirmed the accuracy of what he had written in this Psalm—one party to receive blessings and eternal life, the other to receive curses and eternal death.

I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him. (Ps. 37:35-40)

This Psalm gives a series of admonitions on how to achieve the best out of life while living among the wicked of this world. Each of these admonitions is followed by a testimony that confirms the truth of the exhortation.

To summarize, we are told not to fret or to be envious of the illusory success of the wicked. Rather, our delight should come from a relationship with the Lord. We should commit our way to that of the Lord and to place our trust in Him. Rest [forbear, hold one's peace] in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Forsake wrath, cease from anger over the deeds of the wicked, as they will be cut off soon enough. Depart from evil. Do good because God loves justice, but the wrath of man does not produce justice. And finally, wait upon the Lord; being obedient to His way of life, knowing that in due time the blessing from God will be the answer to all of His promises.

The consequence of not applying these admonitions in this present world can lead only to a disheartening experience in life, with much anguish of soul to follow. One cannot change the conduct of the wicked, but one can change his attitude toward how he handles his thoughts and emotions because of the evil in the world. This psalm urges the righteous to have full confidence in God's plan according to His purpose. So

# **Bethel Church of God**

Selected Psalms & Psalm 37

we are advised to make God the center of our lives.

©2007 Bethel Church of God