

PSALM 37

Security of Those Who Trust in the LORD, and Insecurity of the Wicked.

INTRODUCTION.

- A. From Roy H. Enoch (4-27-94). A Psalm of David.
- B. This acrostic psalm is called “a series of proverb-like cameos” by Ash. There seems to be no over-all order or organization, but a stringing of popular sayings or proverbs. David uses the style of Wisdom literature.
- C. Concerning organization, Ash says, “Though it is difficult to outline the psalm, it does have a unity of concept--the inevitability of God’s justice, blessing the righteous (vss. 3-6, 9, 11, 16-19, 21-26, 28-31, 33-34, 37, 39-40) and punishing the wicked (vss. 2, 9-10, 13, 15, 17, 20-22, 28, 36, 38).”
- D. Coffman again uses the paragraphs suggested by Leupold (as outlined below).

COMMENTS.

- A. Counsel against irritation over evil-doers (37:1,2).
Do not fret because of evildoers,
Be not envious toward wrongdoers.
2 For they will wither quickly like the grass
And fade like the green herb.
[v1,2] “Do not fret because of evildoers...” is almost the same as: Prov. 24:19. “For they shall soon be cut down like grass...” The wicked may prosper for a little while, or for most of this life, but that does not compare with eternity.
- B. The need of trust in the Lord (37:3-7).
Trust in the LORD and do good;
Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.
4 Delight yourself in the LORD;
And He will give you the desires of your heart.
5 Commit your way to the LORD,
Trust also in Him, and He will do it.
6 He will bring forth your righteousness as the light
And your judgment 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 carries out wicked schemes.
 1. Several words in these verses center on the Lord: TRUST, TAKE DELIGHT, COMMIT, BE STILL, WAIT PATIENTLY, FRET NOT. These conditions are necessary to receive the blessings promised. And such behavior will give us the desires of our hearts like security, peace of mind, and justice.
 2. “...do not fret...” or do not worry is often commanded. It shows a lack of faith, and replaces the blessings of peace and contentment with frustration.
- C. Further reasons for not fretting over Evil-doers (37:8-11).
Cease from anger and forsake wrath;
Do not fret; *it leads* only to evildoing.
9 For evildoers will be cut off,
But those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land.
10 Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more;
And you will look carefully for his place and he will not be *there*.
11 But the humble will inherit the land
And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.
“...anger... wrath... fretting... only causes harm.” There is no benefit to worrying. God will make things right and we should trust Him.
[v10] “For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more;”
[v11] “But the meek shall inherit the earth,..” (Mt. 5:5).

D. The futility of the wrongdoer's activity (37:12-15).

The wicked plots against the righteous
And gnashes at him with his teeth.

13 The Lord laughs at him,
For He sees his day is coming.

14 The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow
To cast down the afflicted and the needy,
To slay those who are upright in conduct.

15 Their sword will enter their own heart,
And their bows will be broken.

1. "...and gnashes at him with his teeth." This animalistic expression for great hatred and rage was used to describe those tradition bound Jews who stoned Stephen in Ac. 7:54.
2. "The wicked have drawn the sword.... Their sword shall enter their own heart..." The Lord is able to bring justice on all and mercy on those who will accept it. See Gal. 6:7,8.

E. The Righteous and the Wicked Contrasted (37:16-22).

As Ash points out in *The Living Word Commentary* on Psalms from v.12 to the rest of the psalm, "either the righteous or wicked are mentioned in practically every verse" p. 136.

Better is the little of the righteous
Than the abundance of many wicked.

17 For the arms of the wicked will be broken,
But the LORD sustains the righteous.

18 The LORD knows the days of the blameless,
And their inheritance will be forever.

19 They will not be ashamed in the time of evil,
And in the days of famine they will have abundance.

20 But the wicked will perish;
And the enemies of the LORD will be like the glory of the pastures,
They vanish--like smoke they vanish away.

21 The wicked borrows and does not pay back,
But the righteous is gracious and gives.

22 For those blessed by Him will inherit the land,
But those cursed by Him will be cut off.

[v16] "A little that the righteous man has..." The Psalms and Proverbs often speak of the blessing of being content with what we have as a source of happiness. Greed will rob us the blessings we should have from the blessings that God has given us.

These descriptions seem easy to understand and offer a great blessing if we will think about the consequences of serving the Lord and the consequences of doing as we please.

F. The Blessings Enjoyed by the Righteous (37:23-28).

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord..." The man is good because he is following the directions that the Lord has given. We cannot be good on our own (Jer. 10:23).

The steps of a man are established by the LORD,
And He delights in his way.

24 When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong,
Because the LORD is the One who holds his hand.

25 I have been young and now I am old,
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
Or his descendants begging bread.

26 All day long he is gracious and lends,
And his descendants are a blessing.

27 Depart from evil and do good,
So you will abide forever.

28 For the LORD loves justice
And does not forsake His godly ones;
They are preserved forever,
But the descendants of the wicked will be cut off.

[v24] “Though he fall...not utterly cast down...” This may be the kind of discouragement that Paul often speaks of, that we have the power to bear (2Cor. 4:9; 6:10).

[v25] “...I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.” Some think that this is just a personal observation by David, like Paul sometimes used the expression, “in my judgment...” See 1Cor. 7:40. But Paul claims the “Spirit of God” in his judgment which seems to me that he is indicating that this is the judgment of one inspired by God. David may also be speaking by inspiration and therefore this which is stated as a personal observation may be an inspired principle that is general, but not universal in every instance.

G. Further Marks of the Righteous.

“The righteous shall inherit the land,...” This is similar to 37:11, “The meek shall inherit the earth,” as well as several other verses of this psalm: 3, 9, 18, 22, 28 and 34.

The righteous will inherit the land

And dwell in it forever.

30 The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom,
And his tongue speaks justice.

31 The law of his God is in his heart;
His steps do not slip.

32 The wicked spies upon the righteous
And seeks to kill him.

33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand
Or let him be condemned when he is judged.

34 Wait for the LORD and keep His way,
And He will exalt you to inherit the land;
When the wicked are cut off, you will see it.

[v33] The Lord will not leave him (the righteous) in his (the wicked) hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.” Sometimes the righteous are judged and condemned by man, but God will exalt him, even as the Christ was condemned by men, but exalted by God.

H. Final Contrast of the righteous and Wicked (37:35-40).

I have seen a wicked, violent man

Spreading himself like a luxuriant tree in its native soil.

36 Then he passed away, and lo, he was no more;
I sought for him, but he could not be found.

37 Mark the blameless man, and behold the upright;
For the man of peace will have a posterity.

38 But transgressors will be altogether destroyed;
The posterity of the wicked will be cut off.

39 But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD;
He is their strength 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.

[v37] “Mark the blameless man,... for the future of that man is peace.” The natural consequence of living peacefully and doing good is for people to want to protect them, as well as God blessing them.

[v38] “But the transgressors shall be destroyed together...” The natural consequence of those who cause trouble is to have trouble, and those who get even will receive the same. Jesus stated this principle in many times; see Mt. 26:52.

[v39,40] “And the Lord shall help them,... salvation... their strength... shall deliver... save them... because they trust in Him.” We should take comfort in such promises, because the Lord still gives this kind of assurance through the gospel.