

## Wisdom Psalms

(Psalms 1, 37, 112, and 127)

### Psalm 37: David Looks Back

#### 1. INTRODUCING THE PSALM

- The Psalm is ascribed to David who clearly wrote the Psalm as an old man looking back on his experience: *"I was young and now I am old"* (vs. 25).
- A Wisdom Psalm, the psalm teaches, presents the good or godly life, contrasts the righteous with the wicked, and taps into creation and experience for evidence.
- The most familiar verse of the psalm is vs. 5, *"Commit your way to the LORD; Trust also in him; and He shall bring it to pass."*
- The psalm is an acrostic, two verses for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet with a few exceptions.
- No doubt Jesus had this psalm in mind (vs. 11) with his beatitude in Mt 5:5, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

#### 2. THE PSALM IN DETAIL

- Vss. 1-2: David addresses his look back especially to those who "fret" (literally, "burn" or "get hot over") or envy the apparent success and prosperity of evildoers. What he sees back over his shoulder and ahead of him is the sure and sudden end of those who work evil. It's like the quick withering of grass and plants in the hot sun.
- Vss. 3-8: Instead of worry and envy, David presents a set of alternatives, all as commands: Look at the verbs: *"Trust in the Lord"* (vs 3); *"Dwell in the land"* (vs. 3); *"Enjoy safe pasture"* (vs. 3); *"Delight yourself in the Lord"* (vs. 4); *"Commit your way to the Lord"* (vs. 5, literally, "Roll your way upon the Lord"); *"Trust him"* (vs 5); *"Be still before the Lord"* (vs. 7); *"Refrain from anger"* (vs. 8); *"Do not fret"* (vs. 8).
- Note the promises and assurances attached to the commands in vss. 4-6.
- Look where angry worry takes you in vs. 8.
- Vs. 9 gives us the first *"inherit the land"* promise. The phrase means "live life to the fullest." In this psalm the following "inherit the land": those who hope in the LORD (vs. 9); the meek (vs. 11); those the LORD blesses ( vs. 22); the righteous (vs. 29); those who wait for the LORD and keep his way (vs. 34). Note vs. 11 and "shalom."
- Vs. 10, *"A little while"* is an important phrase in the Bible, especially as it denotes the short life-span of evil. It's used of Satan's short reign near the end of time (Rev. 20:3).
- Vs. 13, "The LORD laughs at the wicked." See Psalm 2:4 and 59:8. The laugh is a "scoff," a jeer, a laugh of scorn.
- Vs. 15, "their swords will pierce their own hearts": The image shows how evil is eventually self-destructive
- Through much of the psalm David characterizes and compares the righteous and evildoers. The table on the reverse side summarizes David's observations from experience, comparing the righteous with evildoers :

RIGHTEOUS	EVILDOERS
	Plot against the righteous (vs. 12)
	War against the needy and upright (vs. 14)
Have little (vs. 16)	Wealthy (vs. 16)
Will endure forever (vss. 18, 29, 37)	Will perish and vanish (vss. 20, 38)
Borrow and do not repay (vs. 21)	Give generously (vss. 21, 25, 26)
Inherit the land (vs. 22)	Cursed and cut off (vs. 22)
Speaks for wisdom and justice (vs. 30)	
Feet do not slip (vs. 31)	
	Lie in wait to murder the righteous (vs. 32)
Have a future (vs. 37)	Their future will be cut off (vs. 37)
Take refuge in the LORD (vs. 40)	

- Vs. 34 encourages us to “wait for the LORD and keep his way.” Patience and obedience are to characterize Christians in a culture going bad.
- Like all good wisdom psalms, this one gives us many images or pictures to contemplate. Here is a list of the images from God’s creation presented to teach the truths of Psalm 37:

- Vs. 2: Withering grass
- Vs. 2: Dying plants
- Vs. 3: Herds enjoying safe pasture
- Vs. 6: Dawn and the noontday sun
- Vs. 13: A laughing LORD
- Vs. 14: The sword and bow turned against the poor
- Vs. 15: Broken bow and sword piercing the heart of the one wielding it
- Vs. 19: Famine and plenty
- Vs. 20, The fleeting beauty of fields
- Vs. 20, Vanishing smoke
- Vs. 23, 31: Firm steps
- Vs. 25, Children begging for bread
- Vs. 35, A flourishing green tree
- Vs. 39, stronghold or fortress

### LIVING THE PSALMS

1. **Wisdom learns from experience.**
2. **Worry is best replaced with commitment and trust in the Lord.**
3. **Christians are meant to delight in the LORD and His Word.**
4. **Anger and anxiety take us to bad places.**
5. **There is no future in evil; after a “little while” it self-destructs.**
6. **The LORD brings certainty and accomplishment to our lives.**
7. **A full, rich life on earth belongs to the meek.**
8. **God will not forsake us.**
9. **In a culture going bad, Christians practice patience and obedience.**