

**\* The Heights Baptist Church \* Series: The Psalms \***  
**\* Topic: Trust the LORD \* Psalm 37 \* 8/17/25 \***

MAIN POINT

During this time of common grace on this earth, evil may appear to be prevailing. God counsels us not to fret, put our hope in Him, and wait on Him while continuing to do good.

INTRODUCTION

**What is the difference between a legitimate fear and a phobia?**

While a legitimate fear is an emotional response to a real threat, which subsides after the threat is removed, a phobia is an irrational fear about something that doesn't present an actual threat.

**Do you have a phobia you are willing to share with the group?**

Some unusual phobias include "nomophobia", which is fear of being without your cell phone, or losing phone service; and "pogonophobia", which is severe fear of beards.

In today's lesson, we will be studying Psalm 37, which starts with, "Do not fret because of those who are evil..." This Psalm is a Psalm of David, who often found himself amongst evil people who were out to harm him. Psalm 37 is known as "a wisdom Psalm". This classification is given to Psalms that emphasize the importance of walking righteously with God, and offer advice on how to do this.

UNDERSTANDING

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 37:1-2

**As David introduces this Psalm, what two things does he warn us against concerning evil people?**

Don't fret, and don't become envious.

**What's the difference between fretting and becoming envious? Why might we be tempted to fall into either of these two sinful emotions?**

Fretting is becoming worried about the wickedness around us. Maybe we fret because the wicked seem so strong and we may be concerned that harm may come to us, or we may forget that God is in control. Meanwhile, we see wicked people gaining power and wealth and apparently enjoying sinful pleasures. This could tempt us to feel like we may be missing out on the fun we could have if we joined them.

**In verse 2, why does David say it's so important to heed his warnings?**

This sinful world is very temporary, and the wicked will soon disappear. Life is full of stressors and temptations. We may doubt God's love for us or His power or enforce justice. But David urges us not to become worried or envious when we see such things taking place because God's perfect sense of timing will soon result in the destruction of the ungodly, and the righteous will reign with Christ.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 2 PETER 3:8-9

**What is one reason God is not stepping in right now to bring an end to the evil in the world?**

God is providing time for sinful people to repent. But how can we avoid getting agitated by evildoers? Verses 3-8 tell us several things we can do to help us not to fret or envy due to the wickedness around us.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 37:3-8

*Note to study leader:* Consider writing the responses to the following question on the whiteboard as people come up with them.

**What are some of the actions and attitudes described in these verses that we are to carry out as Christians while living in this fallen world?**

David gives us several alternatives to worrying about the temporary success of evildoers. We're to trust in the Lord, delight in the Lord, commit our ways to the Lord, be still before Him, and not to become angry.

**How will doing these things help us to avoid fretting or envying because of the wicked people around us?**

In short, we are to move our focus off the things that agitate us and put them on the sovereign Lord who reigns over everything.

**What does it look like to truly trust God? How will this help us not to fret about evil?**

We are to trust Him with our burdens, and trust him despite our circumstances. In 1 Peter 5:7, God commands that we cast all of our worries on him.

**What does David say we must do to show we are trusting God?**

David says that we show our trust by doing what is good (v. 3). There is no better expression of faith or trust than obedience. In the same way that evildoers show a lack of faith by their actions, we must show our faith not only by not joining evildoers, but through active obedience to God's Word.

**What does it look like to truly delight in God? How will this help us not to envy evil people?**

**What does David promise will happen if we delight in the Lord (v. 4)? What does this mean?**

We are created to bring glory to God (Isaiah 43:7 and Ephesians 1:11-12). So, the more we delight in Him, the more we will see the desires of our hearts align with the reason we were created, to bring glory to him. The more we spend time with God in prayer, in His Word, and in fellowship with other believers, the more we will find the desires of our hearts being met in God, and the less interest we will have in trying to have our desires fulfilled elsewhere.

**How is committing oneself to the Lord different than obeying the Lord or delighting in Him?**

To commit to God is to choose ahead of time to follow him, no matter the cost, since God is greater than all of our circumstances.

**What does it mean to "be still before the Lord, and wait patiently before him" (v. 7)?**

There is more to David's command to "be silent" than just taking deep cleansing breaths to lower our blood pressure or calm our rage, or distract ourselves from temptation. First, we do need to step back from our busy schedules and be still. And we are to be silent "before the Lord." In such times of silence, He is our focus. This kind of silence and patient waiting has an element of expectation as we wait on God to do something about that which has unsettled us. There will come a time when evildoers will experience justice and the godly will be edified, but we have to wait for God to move according to His perfect timing.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 37:9-20

**Name everything you can from these verses regarding God's promises for evildoers.**

**In contrast, what promises are for those who trust in the Lord?**

**Is the brevity of life on earth typically encouraging or discouraging to most people?**

**According to verses 2 and 10, why is it good to remember the brevity of this life on earth?**

**How does knowing the ultimate end of evildoers and those who trust the Lord help you respond to the chaos in the present?**

**What did David mean when he wrote that "the Lord laughs at the wicked" (v. 13)?**

We need to remember that though wickedness may seem to have the upper hand, its end is certain. God's perspective on time is different than ours. Our time on earth is immeasurably short compared to eternity.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 37:21-40

**How do these verses help us grasp "the Lord loves justice" and "will not forsake His saints" (v. 28)?**

**What does it mean that the Lord delivers the righteous from the wicked and saves them?**

We do not need to fear those who can only harm our temporary bodies, but not our souls (Matt. 10:28). He is our help on earth and, no matter what evil people may do, our place with Him in eternity is secure.

**Looking at verses 21-26, what is one clear contrast between the righteous and the wicked? Why is generosity something the righteous exhibit as we walk with Christ?**

Wanting to borrow and not repay is a sign of selfishness. This contrasts with choosing to give generously and being willing to lend freely. These qualities are a sign of selflessness and a sign that we are trusting God and not circumstances for our sense of security and meaning in life.

**What promise do we get in the middle of these verses on generosity in verses 23-24, and how is it related to generosity?**

As discussed in last week's lesson, generosity helps us keep our delight on God, not money, and when we delight in Him, He promises to uphold us by his hand.

APPLICATION

**There is so much in Psalm 37 that we can apply. Thinking about the list of actions or attitudes we've discussed from this Psalm, what is one action or attitude you can focus on this week?**

PRAYER

Thank God that He loves justice and will never forsake us. Thank Him that one day soon Jesus is coming back, and wickedness will be done away with. Ask God to give us the grace not to fret about evil, or to envy evildoers. Help us to trust in God, delight in God, commit ourselves to God, and wait on Him. Help us not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good. Help us to realize our fight is not against people, but for people. Help us to be generous, and to have a heart for the lost, not wanting any to perish, but to come to a saving knowledge of God.

## COMMENTARY

### Psalm 37

Overview: The righteous should not be dismayed over the apparent prosperity of the wicked, for it is fleeting. This psalm, like many passages in Proverbs, reinforces this truth through descriptions of the kindness of the righteous, the fierceness of the wicked, and their respective fates. In addition, it uses personal observation and exhortation.

37:1. To envy the wicked is a temptation when one sees them prospering. Such an attitude is in essence doubting God's justice (73:3) and is prohibited here as well as in other texts (Pr 23:17; 24:1,19).

37:2. To refrain from envying the wicked is easier if we stop to consider their destiny (cp. 73:3,17-20). Grass and tender green plants are temporary and do not last (103:15; Job 14:2; Isa 40:6; Mt 6:30).

37:3. God's covenant promise to His people was that they would dwell in the land... securely if they obeyed His commands. "The land" is significant in this psalm as the "inheritance" of those who were loyal to Yahweh (37:9,11,22,29,34).

37:4. When there is close fellowship with Yahweh, a person's heart's desires will match God's will and purposes (see Mt 6:33 and Lk 12:31).

37:5-6. The images of "shine like the dawn" and "like the noonday" could mean either that the psalmist's vindication (the demonstration of God's justice in his life) will be seen by all or that God's justice is as certain as the rising of the sun. In either case, there is comfort in the fact that God will answer His people's prayers for justice.

37:7. "Be silent" is a command similar to being "quiet" before the Lord (62:1,5). Sometimes it is the result of discipline (Lam 3:28), but here it means to wait on the Lord instead of acting on one's own.

37:8-9. The psalmist's anger was apparently caused by the observation that the wicked were prospering and God had not judged them (v. 1). The prohibition on anger and agitation is repeated, as is the reason—the promise of the destruction of evildoers.

37:10. Although from the human perspective God was delaying the execution of His justice, from His perspective it was only a little while (Job 24:24; 2Pe 3:8-9).

37:11. The humble are similar to the "poor," "needy," and "afflicted" in other psalms. They are those who are "brokenhearted" before Yahweh.

37:12-17. David issued a strong warning about the future of the ungodly. The wicked may plot against the righteous, scheming to do them harm, but the Lord only laughs in derision. Their day of reckoning with God in the final judgment is coming. The wicked may draw the sword against the poor, but it will be turned against them and pierce their own hearts. Their own power will be broken. Far better is the little in this world that the righteous have than the wealth of many wicked. Take the long look, David said. The power of the wicked will be broken. But the Lord upholds the righteous who trust him.

37:18-22. David declared that the days of the blameless are known to the Lord (cp. Ps. 90:12). In other words, he is involved with them (cp. Ps. 1:6) to preserve and prosper them. When difficulty comes, whether disaster or famine, they will not wither like evil men, but they will enjoy plenty from his hand. But the wicked will perish and pass from the scene like smoke. They will suffer great loss and be cast into eternal hell by the Lord.

37:23-26. David focused more intently on the blessing of the righteous. The Lord delights in the way of those who trust him, making his steps firm. Even if he should stumble in the face of difficult adversity, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him. David was obviously advanced in age, looking back on his life that had experienced the faithfulness of God. I was young and now I am old, he said, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken. Thus, they have plenty to lend freely and abundance overflows to their children who are never begging bread.

37:27-29. David reminded the righteous to turn from evil and do good. This is a call for a lifestyle of repentance, separation, and holiness. A person who does this will always live securely, knowing God's protection and provision. David was assured that God would not forsake his faithful ones. The wicked would be cut off in judgment, but the righteous would be protected forever and inherit and dwell in the land throughout future generations.

37:30-34. The virtues of the righteous man are noteworthy. His mouth speaks wisdom and justice because the law of God occupies his heart. God's truth so affects his daily life that his feet do not slip into sinful ways. Even when the wicked seek to ambush the righteous, the Lord will come to their rescue and not leave them in their power to be condemned with false accusations in court. Thus, the righteous should wait for the Lord. Those who do will know God's security though the wicked are cut off. In due time God will exalt his own to inherit the land.

37:35-38. One last time David contrasted the wicked and the blameless. The wicked may initially flourish like a green tree, giving every appearance of strength and success, but he is soon gone. But the blameless and upright have a glorious future. All present injustices will be made right by God, whether now or in eternity. His people must wait on him.

37:39-40. Concluding with a positive affirmation, David declared, The salvation of the righteous comes from the Lord. This divine rescue comes because the Lord is the stronghold (Heb. maoz, "a strong fortified place") for all who take refuge in him.