

## How to Look for Peace in Troubled Times Psalm 37, Part One

Thesis of Psalm 37: there is a secure future for the righteous who commit their lives to God and trust in His care.

Introduction: Two understandings every Christian must have in order to maintain a right perspective while living in a broken world—

1. There is good and there is evil in this world.
2. As a new creation in Christ, God has made you an alien in this world. You have a divine mission and your first allegiance is to Christ your King.

Psalm 37 is structured as an acrostic. Approximately every other verse begins with a word that begins with a succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Acrostics were memory devices to help retain teaching.

Psalm 37 is Hebrew wisdom literature and it presents repeated themes. Like Proverbs, it is correctly explained according to its topics and themes.

David's concern: 'How can you keep your heart from becoming bitter or surrendering to evil values when you see people around you breaking God's laws yet appearing to prosper?'

Nine imperatives for the people of God organized as three looks:

A look inward, a look upward, and a look outward.

### 1. The Inward Look

Three negative emotions to be restrained when confronted by social evil.

- A. The emotion of Fretting (verses 1, 7b, 8b)  
Allowing yourself to get agitated to the point where you are worried and irritable.  
Warning: avoid over-attention to deceitful, abusive, or lawless people. Do not let them get under your skin and into your soul.
- B. Envy (verses 1b, 2, 9a)  
Seeing what other people have and feeling we want or need the same.  
If not restrained envy can trap you into bad decisions, wearying activities, and spiritual passivity.
- C. Anger (verse 8) (James 1:20)  
Anger and wrath can refer to rage, hot displeasure, and indignation. Emotions often stirred up by too much fretting. Unrestrained anger leads to hurting people. Anger erodes faith in God's goodness and justice. It will degrade your witness for Christ.

### 2. The Upward Look

- A. Trust the Lord (v. 3) (Luke 6:27-28; Romans 12:21)  
Trust what? God's goodness. His sovereign purposes which are far larger than your personal circumstances.  
You trust the principles of His word.

How do you learn this trust? From time invested in listening to God's Word and practicing what you hear--especially by imitating God and doing good to others.

- B. Delight yourself in the Lord (verse 4)  
Telling God often that you are glad He opened up your heart and mind so you could see your need for forgiveness and recognize His merciful atonement for you in Jesus Christ.  
It means to look for His beauty and goodness around you.

The Hebrew word translated 'desires' actually means 'requests'. God responds to the *requests* of those who delight in Him.

- C. Commit your way to the Lord (verses 5-6)  
Your 'way' refers to your life. Commitment means an attitude of submission to God, 'rolling your burdens off' onto His care, and letting God vindicate your reputation.

### 3. The Outward Look

- A. Dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness (verse 3b)

The Land, for Jews, has always been a comprehensive symbol for the covenant promises of God to His people.  
Therefore, to dwell in the land meant to look for the opportunities and privileges provided by God in your family's parcel of the land.

For Christians 'the Land' will symbolize the blessings of the New Covenant. Dwelling in them points to maintaining the spiritual heritage of gospel salvation and engaging in the new covenant community of the Church.

- B. Turn away from evil and do; 1 good (verse 27, Proverbs 4:14-15; 1 Cor 15:33)  
When you see evil, avoid it.  
The call for doing of good is the complement to the avoidance of evil.
- C. Mark the blameless and behold the upright (verse 37)  
David directs us to learn wisdom by observing the "blameless" and "upright". These mature believers are models for how living God's way brings a level of peace and stability to life.  
They will be present in a healthy church.