

# The Inheritance of the Meek

## Psalm 37

Sometimes the wicked sing while the righteous suffer. Psalm 37 teaches the faithful not just to avoid envy, but also why. We're in a story and should consider what happens in the distant chapters ahead. David has become an old man and speaks from the wisdom of age.

### Summary of the Text

Psalm 37 is another alphabet acrostic. It contains two verses per letter, skipping the letter ayin. It reads more like Proverbs with short sections and themes, developing from the first two verses: "Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb" (vv. 1-2; cf. Prov. 24:19). This psalm can be divided into three sections. The first describes the characters of the meek who will inherit the earth (vv. 1-11). In the second, David contrasts the conduct of the wicked and the righteous, revealing their very different outcomes (vv. 12-24). The third section begins with personal testimony and then has direct counsel to consider how the story unfolds over time, leading the wise to salvation (vv. 25-40).

### Fret Not

The word for *fret* means to become hot or angry. In Hebrew idiom an angry person has a burning face, and a patient person has a long nose—it takes a while for the heat to get to his head (cf. Jms. 1:19). David says to simmer down on account of evildoers (v. 1). There they go apparently getting away with it, but soon they will be mowed down like grass and wither like green herbs (v. 2). The first section culminates at verse 11, quoted by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). This whole psalm unpacks this beatitude. The reason you are tempted to fret and envy the wicked is because they prosper while the faithful languish, and it seems like nothing will ever change. What can the righteous but sit there being meek? Biblical meekness is humility before God and might before men. It does not just sit passively but takes action, understanding how the Lord governs the world. Moses had doubts about himself but great trust in God, and therefore he was the meekest man on the face of the earth (Num. 12:3). David says the workers of iniquity will be cut down, but the one who trusts the Lord and does good will dwell in the land and feed on His faithfulness (v. 3). Delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart (v. 4). If delight comes first, then your heart won't be filled with evil desires. Verse five says literally "roll your way upon the Lord." Take what you want you want to do, put it upon Him, and He'll see it through. Your righteousness will come to *public* light and justice revealed in the middle of the day (v. 6). We accomplish this not by striving but by resting in the Lord and waiting patiently, which keeps us from anger over the prosperity of the wicked; don't let ungodly anger at God or man make it worse (vv. 7-8). It won't be long until the Lord cuts them off while those who wait on God inherit the earth (v. 9). In fact, soon you'll look carefully and won't be able to find the wicked, but the meek will be busy delighting themselves in the abundance of peace (vv. 10-11). Notice all the things the meek do when they are not fretting: trust, do good, dwell in the land, feed on God's faithfulness, delight in Him, commit their way, trust, rest, wait patiently, not fret again, cease from anger and forsake wrath, third time don't fret, wait on the Lord, inherit the earth, discover the disappearance of the wicked, and delight in the abundance of peace. The meek are busy and bear much fruit.

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### The Wicked & The Righteous

David puts the darkness next to the light. The wicked plots against the just and grinds his teeth, but God laughs at him because He knows judgment day comes (vv. 12-13). Don't try to be holier than God and refuse to laugh. The wicked get their weapons out to attack the poor and needy, but they fall on their own sword and break their bows (vv. 14-15). The little that the righteous has is better than the riches of many wicked because while their evil arms will be broken, the Lord sustains the righteous (vv. 16-17). You can scheme, plot, cut corners, climb the greasy ladder of ambition, compromise principles, flatter, and take bribes, and your fall will be greater. The righteous deal with calamitous times and will be satisfied in days of famine, while the wicked will be cut off (vv. 19-20). Think of Joseph in Egypt and Christians in the early church loving their neighbors during plagues. The wicked borrows and doesn't repay, but the righteous shows mercy and gives (v. 21). He knows he can do this because he's inheriting the earth (v. 22). God establishes and delights in the way of a good man (v. 23). He can stumble and fall but will get back up by the helping hand of God (v. 24). We see that faith in God is antifragile. It appears weak but gains strength and even thrives during hard times. Think of a one young couple starting out being frugal, saving, planning, and building, and another couple maxing out credit cards and living large. You can only see the large part with the naked eye, but wisdom knows something else going on.

### The Geezer's Long View

David was young once but now is an old man; he has yet to see the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread (v. 25). Instead, all the day he's merciful and lends and his descendants are blessed (v. 26). This is how God tells the story: "...the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell in it forever" (v. 29). Wisdom springs from the elderly and the mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom (v. 30). "Wisdom is with aged men, and with length of days, understanding" (Job 12:12). It takes wisdom to understand wisdom. Those without hunger for it won't benefit. You can find a Christian beggar and other exceptions it doesn't change the truth. David has seen so much conflict, treachery, covetousness, and violence: Goliath, Saul, Ahithophel, Shimei, Absalom, Adonijah, the Philistines and more tried to kill him or usurp his throne. Though a sinner, David played the long game and still was when he wrote this (vv. 34-36). Wait on the Lord, mark the blameless man, observe the upright (vv. 34, 37). *Pay attention.* Sin falls into short-term thinking, seeking pleasure now at the cost of peace and righteousness later. Counting the cost to follow Christ means enduring hardship, loss, conflict, bad reputation, and hard things from Aleph to Tav, A to Z, and believing that He will bless you because you trust in Him (v. 40). Christ alone saves. God loves to deliver, and He will do it. He delivers from sin and death, and along with bestowing salvation, He makes us inherit the earth. We enjoy the beginning of these gifts now and He adds no sorrow to it (Prov. 10:22). Rather than divorcing our trust in God from the wisdom we need for this great inheritance, we should look to Christ do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before Him.