

Day 339 - TUESDAY: January 16th

Psalms 35, 36, 37 (skip 33 & 34)

Psalms 35:1-28 NKJV

A Psalm of David. Plead my cause, O LORD, with those who strive with me; Fight against those who fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, And stand up for my help. Also draw out the spear, And stop those who pursue me. Say to my soul, "I am your salvation." Let those be put to shame and brought to dishonor Who seek after my life; Let those be turned back and brought to confusion Who plot my hurt. Let them be like chaff before the wind, And let the angel of the LORD chase them. Let their way be dark and slippery, And let the angel of the LORD pursue them. For without cause they have hidden their net for me in a pit, Which they have dug without cause for my life. Let destruction come upon him unexpectedly, And let his net that he has hidden catch himself; Into that very destruction let him fall. And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD; It shall rejoice in His salvation. All my bones shall say, "LORD, who is like You, Delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, Yes, the poor and the needy from him who plunders him?" Fierce witnesses rise up; They ask me things that I do not know. They reward me evil for good, To the sorrow of my soul. But as for me, when they were sick, My clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; And my prayer would return to my own heart. I paced about as though he were my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns for his mother. But in my adversity they rejoiced And gathered together; Attackers gathered against me, And I did not know it; They tore at me and did not cease; With ungodly mockers at feasts They gnashed at me with their teeth. Lord, how long will You look on? Rescue me from their destructions, My precious life from the lions. I will give You thanks in the great assembly; I will praise You among many people. Let

them not rejoice over me who are wrongfully my enemies; Nor let them wink with the eye who hate me without a cause. For they do not speak peace, But they devise deceitful matters Against the quiet ones in the land. They also opened their mouth wide against me, And said, "Aha, aha! Our eyes have seen it." This You have seen, O LORD; Do not keep silence. O Lord, do not be far from me. Stir up Yourself, and awake to my vindication, To my cause, my God and my Lord. Vindicate me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness; And let them not rejoice over me. Let them not say in their hearts, "Ah, so we would have it!" Let them not say, "We have swallowed him up." Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion Who rejoice at my hurt; Let them be clothed with shame and dishonor Who exalt themselves against me. Let them shout for joy and be glad, Who favor my righteous cause; And let them say continually, "Let the LORD be magnified, Who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant." And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness And of Your praise all the day long.

Psalms 36:1-12 NKJV

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David the Servant of the LORD. An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flatters himself in his own eyes, When he finds out his iniquity and when he hates. The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; He has ceased to be wise and to do good. He devises wickedness on his bed; He sets himself in a way that is not good; He does not abhor evil. Your mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the great mountains; Your judgments are a great deep; O LORD, You preserve man and beast. How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their

trust under the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light. Oh, continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You, And Your righteousness to the upright in heart. Let not the foot of pride come against me, And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away. There the workers of iniquity have fallen; They have been cast down and are not able to rise.

Psalms 37:1-40 NKJV

A Psalm of David. 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. Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday. 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 brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret—it only causes harm. For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the LORD, They shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The wicked plots against the just, And gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him, For He sees that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn the sword And have bent their bow, To cast down the poor and needy, To slay those who are of upright conduct. Their sword shall enter their own heart, And their bows shall be broken. A little that a righteous man has Is better than the riches of many wicked. For

the arms of the wicked shall be broken, But the LORD upholds the righteous. The LORD knows the days of the upright, And their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. But the wicked shall perish; And the enemies of the LORD, Like the splendor of the meadows, shall vanish. Into smoke they shall vanish away. The wicked borrows and does not repay, But the righteous shows mercy and gives. For those blessed by Him shall inherit the earth, But those cursed by Him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lends; And his descendants are blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; And dwell forevermore. For the LORD loves justice, And does not forsake His saints; They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, And dwell in it forever. The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, And his tongue talks of justice. The law of his God is in his heart; None of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous, And seeks to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, Nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the LORD, And keep His way, And He shall exalt you to inherit the land; When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, And spreading himself like a native green tree. Yet he passed away, and behold, he was no more; Indeed I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright; For the future of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together; The future of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; He is their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, And save them, Because they trust in Him.

Daily Deep Dive:

Psalm 35:

The UCG reading program states: "In Psalm 35 David proclaims his innocence and calls on God to destroy his enemies. "Some of the most troubling psalms are those that contain prayers asking God to curse the wicked. These imprecatory psalms are sometimes thought to conflict with the sentiment of the gospel, but in fact they accurately reflect God's abhorrence of evil" (*Nelson Study Bible*, introduction to Psalms).

David is not specific about his trouble, but he speaks of betrayal and injustice—"they hid their net for me without cause" (verse 7). David asks God to intervene: "Plead my cause!" "Fight for me!" "Rescue me!" (verses 1-3). David calls for God to pour out judgment on his enemies: Bring on them "shame" (military defeat). Make them "chaff" (worthless and scattered thin). Lead them into "dark and slippery" paths (troubles and uncertainties). Orchestrate their "ruin" (sudden and complete desolation) (see *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, notes on verses 4-8). After God has dealt with these enemies, "Then," David says, "my soul will rejoice in the Lord and delight in His salvation" (verses 9-10).

David is dumbfounded that people for whom he had shown concern (verses 13-14) have become enemies, detractors and false witnesses (verses 11-16). They gloat, "Aha! Aha! With our own eyes we have seen it" (verse 21, NIV). David's distress in the face of people who hated him without cause (verse 19) and "ruthless witnesses" (verse 11, NIV) foreshadowed the suffering of Jesus Christ (see John 15:24-25; Mark 14:57-59).

The closing section of the psalm states that those who rejoice at David's hurt will be "ashamed" (verse 26)—figuratively "*clothed* with shame" (same verse). This refers "not to simple embarrassment, but to the revelation of the complete emptiness of wickedness before the judgment seat of God" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 26-28).

This section also informs us that there are other people on David's side (verse 27), evidently from among those referred to in verse 20 as the "quiet ones in the land." David is confident that they will shout for joy and praise God with him when he is at last delivered." [END]

Psalm 36:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 35 concluded with reference to the prosperity of God's *servant*--i.e., David (verse 27). Now, the superscription of Psalm 36 refers to David as "the servant of the LORD." The psalm begins by addressing the nature of wickedness, but this is soon contrasted with God's faithfulness and righteousness and His rewarding of His servants such as David with an abundance of true prosperity.

The word "oracle" in verse 1 can simply mean "utterance." The actual order of the verse is "An oracle of transgression of the wicked within my heart." Some see "of the wicked" as actually meaning "*to* the wicked." However, the psalm's focus on God rewarding the righteous and the request for the righteous to be kept from wickedness goes against that being the aim of the psalm. Some translations give "within my heart" as "within *his* heart," thinking the wicked person is intended.

However, the Hebrew *lebi* in the Masoretic Text does mean "my heart." Simply put, David is expressing his deep thoughts about the sinful way of the wicked.

David's consideration of the sinful course of the wicked (verses 2-4) is followed by contemplation of God's mercy, faithfulness, righteousness, justice and unfailing love (verses 5-7). "The contrast of these verses with the previous ones is extreme. Just as the revelation of the depravity in vv. 1-4 is awful, the revelation of the Lord's love is even more wonderful.... The contrasts continue with David ranging from the highest mountains to the depths of the sea to describe the perfect character of God. The height of the great mountains can be compared to how great God's righteousness is; the depths of the seas can be compared with how mysterious and inaccessible God's true judgments are" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 5-6).

Like nestlings seeking shelter and nourishment from a mother bird, so may people find protection and provision from God (verse 7). If the wicked would only cease from their headlong pursuit of fleeting self-gratification through sin and turn to God, they would find true and abundant satisfaction through the fullness of life in His family (verse 8). For the righteous "drink from the river of [God's] pleasures." What a beautiful word picture this is--of an endless, flowing supply of joyful experience forevermore! This river flows from the "fountain of life"--God's Holy Spirit bringing eternal salvation and all its rewards (see also Isaiah 12:3; Isaiah 55:1-2; Jeremiah 2:13; John 7:37-39).

It is only in God's "light" that we "see light" (Psalm 36:9). In context, this may mean that we don't even really know what it means to live and be happy until we experience life in the way God intended. Rather than groping in the blindness of human plotting to find our way, the truth of God reveals the path to ultimate and lasting bliss. On the other hand, the idea here could be that it is through God shining on us (favoring and guiding us)

that we will live to see a bright outcome for our lives (compare Psalm 37:3-6; see also Isaiah 60:19-20).

In closing, David prays that God's loyal love will continue for those who "know" Him and are thereby "upright in heart" (Psalm 36:10). Indeed, truly knowing God implies more than knowing *about* Him. It means having a relationship with Him, which is based on obedience to His laws (see 1 John 2:3-4; John 15:14). To have a relationship, we have to spend quality time with God through prayer, Bible study and contemplative meditation. Even fellowship with likeminded believers is an important way to fellowship with the Father and Christ (1 John 1:3)--as the Father and Christ dwell in faithful believers through the Holy Spirit.

David further asks for protection from the wicked who refuse to submit to God's way (Psalm 36:11)--perhaps thinking of some who were scheming to overthrow him. And he concludes with a final consideration (or prophetic glimpse) of the doom of the wicked (verse 12), which we see more about in the next psalm."

[END]

Psalm 37:

The UCG reading program states: "Psalm 37 ends an apparent grouping of four related psalms (34-37). Like Psalm 34, this one is an alphabetic acrostic, though in this case two verses are usually devoted to each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Because the acrostic style makes it easier to memorize the songs that use it, some see these as "classroom" or "teaching" psalms. This is particularly the case with Psalm 37, as it is essentially a series of related proverbs or wise sayings. (Observe that verse 1 is nearly identical to Proverbs 24:19.)

David's message in the proverbs of Psalm 37 is rather similar to what he said in Psalm 36. The *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* notes

in its introduction to Psalm 37: "This psalm's dominant theme is related to the contrast between the wicked and the righteous reflected in Psalm 36. The central issue addressed is: Who will 'inherit the land' (vv. 9, 11, 22, 29), i.e., live on to enjoy the blessings of the Lord in the promised land? Will the wicked, who plot (v. 12), scheme (vv. 7, 32), [intentionally] default on debts (v. 21), use raw power to gain advantage (v. 14) and seem thereby to flourish (vv. 7, 16, 35)? Or will the righteous, who trust in the Lord (vv. 3, 5, 7, 34) and are humble (v. 11), blameless (vv. 18, 37), generous (vv. 21, 26), upright (v. 37) and peaceable (v. 37), and from whose mouth is heard the moral wisdom that reflects meditation on God's law (vv. 30-31)?"

Where the NIV has the "land" as the inheritance (verses 9, 11, 22, 29, 34), the KJV and NKJV have "earth" (except in verses 29 and 34, though the Hebrew is the same). Either is correct, especially when we realize that the Promised Land of God's Kingdom will encompass the entire earth, not just the land of Israel. Note that the inheritance will be dwelt in "forever" (verses 18, 29). Through these verses we see that the eternal inheritors will be "those who wait on the LORD" (hoping and trusting in Him), "the meek" (those who are humble and teachable), "those blessed by Him" (those who are faithful in their dealings, as implied by the previous verse) and "the righteous" (verse 29). These are of course all the same people--who with their inheritance will receive eternal life, deliverance from enemies, salvation and peace.

Jesus Christ quoted from verse 11 in His famous Sermon on the Mount. Giving what are referred to as the Beatitudes, Jesus in Matthew 5:5 said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Some may be surprised to learn that this is not an exclusively New Testament teaching. Once again we see that, far

from inventing a new religion as many now think, Jesus was building on the teachings of the Old Testament.

The phrase "the LORD knows the days of the upright" (Psalm 37:18) has "several meanings: (1) God knows our circumstances and provides for us; (2) God knows how long we will live and will sustain us to the end (Psalm 90:12); (3) God knows that our days on earth [in this age] are only the beginning of our days with Him in eternity" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Psalm 37:18).

Psalm 37 also sets forth what lies in store for those who do *not* serve God and live according to His teachings. An individual has only two choices when it comes to directing his life--the way of blessing and life or the way of cursing and death (see Deuteronomy 30:15-20). The way of righteousness, of obeying God through outflowing love to Him and others (summarized as the way of *give*), is the one that leads to blessings and life (Psalm 37:3-6). The other choice, the selfish way of disobedience or wickedness (summarized as the way of *get*), leads to misery and death (verses 10, 34-36). The wicked will be cut off--to perish and be forgotten. David uses the metaphor of grass to describe man's brief life on earth. Grass flourishes for a while, then is cut down and withers. So, too, will evil men perish as surely as mown grass withers (verse 2). In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus also spoke about "the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven" (Matthew 6:30).

Another idea David expresses here is that fretting about life is harmful (Psalm 37:1, Psalm 37:7-8). He warns against worry, being overly anxious or succumbing to envy and anger. A righteous person looks to God instead. The literal rendering of verse 5 instructs us to roll our lives over onto God. He will direct a

righteous man's steps, picking him up when he falls (verses 23-24) and taking care of his needs (verses 25-26). We see, then, that the righteous at times will fall; they aren't guaranteed trouble-free lives. Yet, "though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with His hand" (verse 24). With wisdom and love, God shapes a person through trials. In that light, verse 25 should not be misunderstood to mean that God's people never suffer physical deficiency--but that God will always provide for them. Though they may at times have to ask others for help, as David himself did on occasion, they are not destitute beggars in a hopeless sense (and certainly not over the long haul of life). Trusting God, they "feed on His faithfulness" (verse 3). Indeed, even if they lack, the righteous are far better off than the wicked (verse 16)--and are even generous givers of whatever they do have (verse 26).

Jesus observed in the Sermon on the Mount that it is futile to worry. A man can't change his circumstances by worrying. God knows our needs and will take care of them if we remain committed to Him (Matthew 6:25-33). Indeed, Jesus said in this context that one's focus should be on God's Kingdom and righteousness (verse 33)--which is, not coincidentally, also the focus of Psalm 37.

Trusting God, as Psalm 37 instructs, requires one to wait on Him and to do good (verses 3-5, 7; compare 1 Peter 5:6-7). As we wait for resolution to problems, as we wait for the return of Jesus Christ, we have work to do: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). If we remain faithful to Him and continue to trust Him, God will remain

faithful to us--to provide help for today and to save us in the end
(Psalm 37:39-40).” [END]