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*“Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.” Psalm 37:7*

**Main Idea:** Do not be worried, jealous, or even annoyed by people who are evil and make bad decisions. They will not get far or even matter; rather, trust in God’s ways and plans, be delighted in His precepts, and be content in Him as Lord. When we trust in God, He will answer and give us what we need and so much more. Make your commitment sure and do not waver, for He has your back. Focus on God and surrender your fears and will over to Him. Recall Who He is and what He has done. Remember God’s teachings. Be patient that you are doing good and not falling to sin. His ways are best; you are not missing out from those who are wayward. It may look fun; but, all it does is hurt and confuse. Do not envy or get angry at people who are stupid and bad, even when they seemingly succeed. Be the example, and know if they do not repent, they will be destroyed while those who love the Lord and do what is right will be blessed. Evil people hate those who love the Lord and do good. They do not want to be reminded or convicted so they will lash out and be hateful. Know that the Lord laughs at them and has you in His heart. For it is better to be poor and living right than to be rich and be in sin. Be in God’s care and graces, not in His wrath. Be strong in Him and you can go through anything while being all the better for it. Be generous and do not cheat, even if you can prosper by it. If you are doing wrong, stop it and turn to God, repent and live a changed life and receive what is far more valuable. It is all about trusting in the Lord and living by His principles and love. The LORD protects. There is no future for those who are wicked while the ones who love the Lord will inherit eternal life. Allow Him to be your stronghold in times of trouble and in daily life. Obey the LORD and prosper.

### Contexts and Background:

This is an acrostic Psalm like 25 and 119, where each of the stanzas begin with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet; it is also set to music. Psalm 37 serves as a proverb, giving wisdom and advice; and, while it is attributed David, it is more likely that it was composed by Solomon, due to its wisdom theme and connections to his other Psalms and Proverbs. In the Hebrew, it reads like a father instructing his son. Jesus draws from this Psalm to make His point in the Beatitudes, as a source of wisdom and to back up His teachings to the hardened Jews of His time (Matt. 5:5). The image is God Who is righteous with just wrath for sin and wrongdoing; the image is God Who protects the godly, His repentant children.

### Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

**Verses 1-11:** God gives us the ability to have a quiet spirit and a good response, to be calm and composed in life, even with the wicked people prosper with power, greed, and the faithful receiving death, loss. We have the ability of grace by our Gracious God even as we are victims of foolish decisions; we can have wisdom--by the mercy of God Almighty--even in dire times. We have this, through Christ, Our Lord, by knowing the Creator and Ruler of the universe. We know that no one is sinless before Him, and we know He will judge at the appropriate and appointed time. Thus, we can rest in Him and trust in Him (Prov. 24:1,19; 23:17).

- *Do not fret.* This means that we should not lose our composure; it is also a call to look ahead.
- *Evil.* We are called to not be influenced by evil; rather, we are to overcome it by being good and kind (Prov. 25:21; Luke 6:27; Rom. 12:21; James 1:20).
- *Envious.* We are not to be obsessed with the enemies of God and of us. Our focus cannot and should not be on who is winning and who is not in this life; what we have and what is to come is far more important. This call is reinforced by what God does and provides. Whatever we face, we are

never alone. How often we are troubled by our own worries, enticements, and egotism. Then, we have others' fear and pride coming against us by the way of greed, covetousness, selfishness, indifference, uncaring, and simple hatefulness. Yet, in Christ, we have His goodness and grace. Thus, we gain hope and strength for the journey of life and what we are called to do (Psalm 23).

- *Like the grass.* This is an illustration of how grasses and wild flowers come up after the rain in the spring, and will soon lose their appeal and wither up in the hot summer. They do not have staying power like a tree (Isa. 40:8; 1 John 2:17).
- *Trust in the LORD.* This refers to waiting before acting and not venturing into self-pity or uncontrolled anger. This is a foundational confession of faith of placing our faith in God so we have conviction and commitment to know Him, submit and rely on Him, and not our situation, because He is Truth (Ex. 14:32; Psalm 4:5-6; 37:3; Prov. 3:5; Jer. 39:18; Nahum 1:7; Acts 14:23).
- *Do good.* This means to be respectable and constructive with what we have in opportunities and relationships.
- *Safe pasture.* This is an image from shepherding about security, as sheep need water and care, God lovingly cares for His people, and directs us where to go. If we heed His call with gratitude, we will respond acceptably. (Psalm 23; Phil. 4:18).
- *Delight in the LORD.* THIS IS Assurance that God is in control. Wise people will be positive and content and enjoy Gods blessings, even in adversity, because they know God.
- *Desires of your heart.* God's fatherly care. Situation of one who is ill or oppressed seeking deliverance, then prays and receives a response. (Psalm 20:4)
- *Commit your way.* This means to "roll off," as getting rid of a burden, by entrusting in something greater (Pro. 16:3; Jose. 5:9).
- *Righteous reward.* This is God's rule and willingness to reward faithfulness.
- *Vindicate/justice.* When the righteous suffers, God will vindicate for us. God can and will renew us. He seeks those who are loyal with an upright heart and judges the wicked (Psalm 7:14-16).
- *Be still.* This means to be silent, wait patiently, and actively listen to bring us closer in our center of attention upon Him as LORD. This is pure focus on God and surrender to Him. This is not to empty ourselves, a set of breathing exercises, or a skewed meditative practice that takes us away from Christ (Psalm 46:10; 62:5).
- *Turn from wrath/anger.* Be wise with negative emotions; control them or they will control you! Denotes to not be angry at God for the success of sinful people. They will get their judgment; rather, we are to be concerned about ourselves. Anger is a dangerous emotion that can easily get out of control (James 1:20).
- *Destroyed/cut off.* This means to be exiled or excommunicated away from one's family, care, community, and support system. Can even mean to be put to death for crimes (Gen. 17:14; Lev. 17:14).
- *Hope in the LORD.* The knowing that God will act in His proper time, not in our expectations. Our contentment in life is predicated on our faith and in responding with trust and confidence in God, as He is in control.

- *Inherit the land.* God's promise to His people in Israel. Land was life, commerce, and relationships.
- *Meek.* Meaning strength as well as patient faith, to be put to good use and be under control. The opposite is self-assertion. In context, refers the cultivation of farms and orchards that brings about an abundance of crops needed for one's survival and life and a good life too (Matt. 5:5).
- *Peace and prosperity.* Meaning to dwell in God's land by His generosity and have enough. The contrast: life will bring suffering.

**Verses 12-28:** Our main battlefield is not with physical opponents and obstacles; rather, it is with our own minds. How we can be grounded in God's principle and not in our fears and jealousy? God's just anger is against sin that is destructive to relationships, life, and wellbeing of all. So, He seeks to protect by attacking what hurts us all (Rom. 12:1-2).

- *God arises to protect.* The wicked will be plotting to get control, use deception and be brazen enough to attack us; yet, God will protect us.
- *Gnash/gnashing their teeth.* Referring to fanatical hatred and bitter jealousy. The intense anger at someone who is being good, and you are being evil and you take your hate onto them (Job 16:9; Psalm 35: 16; Matt. 13:42; Acts 7:54).
- *Lord laughs.* The foolishness and futility of rebelling against God. God is amused at our presumptions and is mocking those who choose to rebel against Him. He allows it as He allows us liberty and freedom. We can never say *God forced me*; He allows us to make mistakes and loves it when we come back to Him and is even more delighted when we never forsake Him. We can never avoid God or His judgment; nor is He ever threatened by us (Psalm 2:4; 59:8).
- *Upright.* Having a transformed and resourceful mind that looks to God as LORD.
- *Pierce their own hearts.* The consequences of sin and its effects against the one who dares to and those around them. We reap what we sow; crime does not pay. Don't do the crime unless you can do the time. Sin causes its own retribution, that evil conspires upon itself and will take down those who engage in it by natural consequences (Psalm 7:14-16; 26:27; Mark 7:21-22; 26:52; James 1:14-15).
- *Better the little.* What we have in God is far greater than any wealth or power from the world (Prov. 15:16; 16:8,19).
- *Wealth of many wicked.* The contrast of true wealth and the world's wickedness.
- *Do not repay/pay back.* This is a form of stealing, to be lent something and you refuse to bring it back. It violates the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment and brings dishonor to one's family and community, as well as a lack of future trust.
- *LORD blesses/blessed by.* Because one seeks God's face and desires to adhere to His precepts, then God accepts us in an age before Christ (Psalm 23:3).
- *Destroyed.* The power of the wicked will be broken as God will deal with them.
- *Delights in him.* Wise and faithful people are not perfect, but they honor God's principles and become demonstrations to the community at large.

- *Generous.* The contrast is those who never give back or repay with those who are righteous and will give back and more than they have taken. God even causes such people who are faithful and generous to be blessed.
- *Children will be a blessing.* God will not abandon the upright and will bless. Children are the hope for the future and necessary to carry the family on and help in the family farm and business (Act 2:39).
- *Faithful ones.* Those who are governed by God's principles and act in character for His glory. They will have words that are encouraging and uplifting and not lie or manipulate. Their actions will back up their words. They will be wise by thinking and by heart, as inner obedience creates outward actions and performance.
- *Feet do not slip/fall/stumble.* When a faithful person comes to an obstacle, God guides, blesses them and will lift up, defend and protect His faithful. God will not let evil people condemn His faithful. God protects the innocent.
- *Native tree/green laurel tree.* An illustration of wicked will prosper in the world, but should not be envied or admired; rather, they are to be mourned.
- *Blameless just.* God loves His faithful who look to Him for protection and guidance. The righteous must be doing God's will, by revering and placing Him first and be responsible (Prov. 2:8).
- *Sinners.* They are like thugs and cannot stand to be convicted of Truth or be in the presence of Godly people. They like the fake and hate the wise and Truth.
- *No future/prosperity.* Refers to one's personal future and their lineage will have peace and God's presence.
- *Salvation.* Here meaning victory over the wicked schemes, and God's faithful will see themselves vindicated and the evil judged.

### **Devotional Thoughts and Applications:**

To grow in faith, God needs to move us out of our complacency, fears, hurts and pride. So, let God mold, shape, fill, and use you. When we are patient and trusting to our Lord in troublesome times, we can contemplate (recalling and reflecting) what He has revealed to you in His Word and we are to "be still." Then, we can focus on God and surrender to Him. Let Christ the LORD be your attention, gaining good and biblical understanding and insight. We have to know we *can't do life on our own; we need God's intervention and continual guidance.* Without Him, we will fail and we may cause others to fail, too. Trust and obedience are the marks of true discipleship--the result of a God-impacted life, following Him, His precepts, and plan and seeking His purpose for our lives. We are shown God as as One Who protects His people; therefore, we can and must be dependent upon Him, yet still be responsible for our response to His grace and opportunities. We are to walk God's Way. This is hard to see at times, and somehow, even when one's life is taken, we are safe in Him for eternity.

**Christian Life Principle:** God arises to protect and provide for us when we are trusting and obedient to Him. The key is to listen to Him through His Word and "trust and obey" as we sing, "there is no other way..."

**The Essential Inductive Questions** (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

**Additional Questions:**

1. How have you seen jealousy consume people even Christians?
2. How does this Psalm call us to be the example and be generous? What would that mean for your life?
3. How have you trusted in God's ways and plans? How can this help you to be delighted in His principles?
4. How can this psalm be used to help you be more content?
5. What can you do to help not get angry at people who are stupid and bad, even when they seemingly succeed?
6. How much assurance do you have that God is in control? How can this help you be positive and content and enjoy Gods blessings, even in tough times?
7. How do you "*Hope in the LORD?*" How does this shape your happiness and confidence in life?
8. When we trust in God, He will answer and give us what we need and so much more. So, what can you do to make this more so in your life and church?
9. How can you be better at "being still," before God as in being silent waiting patiently and actively listening to Him?
10. How is our contentment in life predicated on our faith with trust and confidence in God, that He is in control. What do you need to do to make this more so?
11. How can we protect ourselves from worry and jealousy?
12. Many feel overwhelmed or too busy or just can get in sync with Scripture