

# Psalms: God's Worship & Prayer Guide

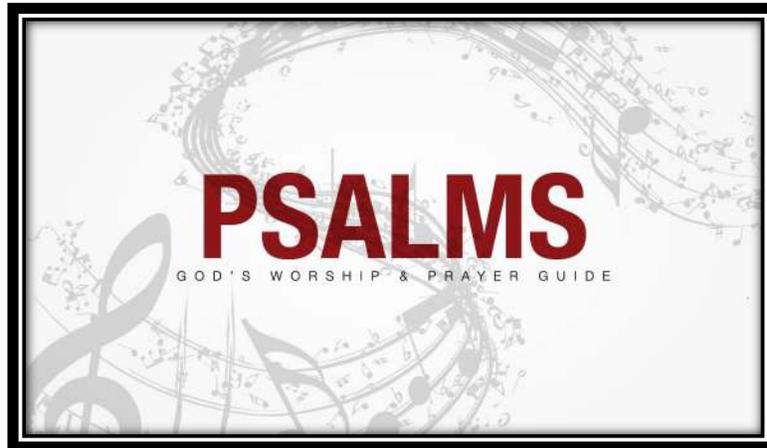
## The Path Of Praise

Psalm 37:1-20

Written By

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**P**rior to his martyrdom at the hands of Caesar Nero, Paul wrote about what Christians should expect prior to the return of Christ at the Second Advent at the close of the seven-year tribulation:

<sup>1</sup> Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, <sup>2</sup> not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

<sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, <sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

“The falling away,” comes from the Greek, *apostasia* (ἀποστασία), a word which, according to Danker, has this meaning:

**ἀποστασία, ας, ἡ** [ἀφίστημι; a late form for ἀπόστασις ‘revolt’] ‘renunciation of previous loyalty’, **rebellion**, extended to allegiance in matters of belief: **apostasy** 2 Th 2:3; ἅ. ἀπὸ Μωϋσέως *a going against Moses = to go against Moses* Ac 21:21.

He adds that is a “defiance of [the] established system or authority.”<sup>1</sup> The use of the article, the, prior to this noun can easily be classified as the monadic use of the article meaning this rebellion and revolt is like none other in human history. It will be a revolt against everything . . .

- Spiritual truth.
- True science.
- Logical reasoning.
- True sexuality.
- Morals.
- Decency.
- Respect.
- History (they will deconstruct it to suit their twisted ideologies)
- The traditional family.
- Respect for the unborn.
- Law and order.

Concerning this last area, Paul adds:

<sup>7</sup> For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way. <sup>8</sup> And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. <sup>9</sup> The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, . . . (2 Thess. 2).

I do not have time to exegete this intriguing, informative prophetic passage. Suffice it to say that utter and prolific lawlessness, at all levels of society, will be pervasive and a prelude to the revelation of the Anti-Christ. He will be the epitome of complete lawlessness, and so, too, will be his mindless, emotionally-driven, power-hungry followers.

Do I need to attempt to validate the fact we are seeing Paul’s prophecy played out in our own day and in our own country? Hardly. Just articulate that you are for all lives because all people are created in the image of God, and you are quickly in the unemployment line in many societal sectors. Just say you support the police and law and order in our streets and you are ridiculed. Just attempt to guard your home from an angry, verbally vile and hostile mob which has broken down your community’s protective gate, and you are brought up on charges. Just say you, as a Christian organization, cannot and will not hire people whose sexual lives contradict the Word of God, and you will now, in the State of Virginia face a potential hefty fine for discrimination. I could go on, but I know you get the point. Lawlessness, as prophesied, is becoming the order of the day. We all know what happens next, or should I say, we all know who is coming.

The question before us as Christians is one David wrestled with in his politically, spiritually, and ethically challenging times.

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 120.

## How Are Saints Supposed To Live In Tumultuous, Testy Times? (Psalm 37)

In verse one through the first part of verse seven, David, a wise and spiritually skilled soldier of God, shares his wisdom on how to answer this query. Two sagacious and timely points readily emerge:

- The Long & Short View: Don't Get Uptight About That Which Is Temporary (Psalm 37:1-2).
- The Long & Short View: Do Live Sold Out To God (Psalm 37:3-7a)

First, when the wicked turn truth and law on its head with little effort and with widespread approval, we, who know the living God, should not get all emotional about those gains which will not echo in eternity. Second, while the wicked are sold out to sin and sin's Master, the Devil, we should do all within our power to live lives consumed and centered on following hard after the true God. How are you faring on these two points of divine command? We all must do our duty because of our relationship to Jesus, the Christ, His blood which redeems and covers us forms the red line which serves to hold the complete advance of evil in check. It is time to get with the spiritual program and stop dragging your feet, or sitting on the fence, while others are picking up their game for God. Like Daniel, we must use our sovereign and strategic placement in life to shine light where the darkness seeks to encroach.

Moving down to the second part of verse 7, David give us more much needed counsel:

### The Long & Short View: Don't Be Undone By The Wins Of The Wicked Because The Reversal Is Coming (Psalm 37:7b-20)

Don't you get tired of their wins? They take over school boards to teach your children to disrespect everything from God and country to God's view of human sexuality. They take over the legal system to codify their twisted ideology and view of morals. They take over universities and train your young adults to despise everything you, as a moral, god-fearing person have built into them. They riot and burn down businesses only to have rich Hollywood types pay for their bail so they can be free . . . to riot and burn again. They cancel anyone and everyone who'd dare speak up for that which is wholesome and true. Unfortunately, the list of vile victories is, well, endless.

How should we react when we seem to lose more ground than we gain? Good question. David's analysis from the Spirit of God is spot on. Listen and learn from him and then apply his counsel to your life right away:

Throughout verses 7 through 20, David not only mentions the tension we all experience as we deal with encroaching evil, but he causes us to remember that *what is, is not what will be*. Put differently, those who are first, shall be last, and those who are last, shall be first. Restated again, the godless who appear to be the winners, will ultimately be the losers, and the godly, who do not win too many rounds in this life, will be the winners when God's kingdom program is completely played out.

David guides our thinking we yet another set of negative commands, one stated and one implied:

<sup>7</sup> 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 carries out wicked schemes.

He opened with this exact command in Hebrew, *al tichar* (אַל-תִּחַר), in verse one, and he will employ it again in verse 8. As stated earlier, the word of the command means not to get explosively angry when you see the advancement of wickedness. Yes, you should oppose it, as every prophet did in the Old Testament. However, per the Lord's word and example we must be slow to anger (Ex. 34:6; James 1:19-20), and use gentle answers to turn away the wrath of the wicked (Prov. 15:1). Further, we can be righteously angry about sin insofar as it deeply concerns and saddens us (Eph. 4:25-26), as it does to God (Ex. 4:14; 15:7:22:24; Lev. 26:28; Deut. 29:26; Jos. 7:1); however, it should not spill uncontrollably out of our lives and verbally burn and decimate the wicked we encounter. We, therefore, should not fill our *Twitter* statements with mean, vile, venomous words. Our *Facebook* accounts should not seethe with how upset and ticked off we are at wickedness. Our interactions with those who love darkness should not be shouting matches with our fists raised in the air or our fingers poking them in their chests. Our emails should not be vengeful nor spiteful either.

Yes, to those wicked, spiritually blind people (which is who we used to be prior to Christ saving us, Eph. 2:1-3), who prosper in and from their wickedness (as Jezebel did for a time when she and her husband seized Naboth's beautiful vineyard, 1 Kings 21), and who execute their wicked schemes effortlessly and with little to no push back from society (as Eli, Israel's High Priest, sons did as they took advantage of women coming to the Tabernacle for worship, 1 Sam. 2:22), we are not to let them cause us to be consumed by and to be eaten up by flaming, unchecked anger.

Are you guilty this election season as so much hangs in the national balance? If friends are de-friending you on Facebook because you are so caustic. It's time to live differently. What should you do? Follow David's next positive command:

<sup>8</sup> Cease from anger and forsake wrath; Do not fret; it leads only to evildoing.

"Cease" is a Hiphil imperative. It means to completely abandon something, or to simply walk away. Here David commands believers to have no part of "anger," which is from the word *aph* (אַף). Holladay's *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, says this word lexically (and literally) means to have a red-hot nose (Gen. 30:2; Prov. 30:33). It thereby denotes a person who is about to explode all over you. If this is you, if the advancement of evil is causing you to brim over and seethe with anger, you need to walk away from it . . . probably by appealing to the Spirit's assistance, of course. Further, you are commanded to "forsake wrath." This synonym is from the Hebrew *chemah* (חֵמָה). Literally, this word denotes the venom released by, say, a snake into its prey (Deut. 32:24). Does this describe your anger at the wonton wickedness you see in this life? Is your response, which is typically verbal or written, tantamount to you emotionally (and joyfully) sinking the venom of your argument into their veins to waylay them? Ah, such is not behavior becoming of a Christian. Why? David gives us the answer in the last clause:

<sup>8</sup> Cease from anger and forsake wrath; *Do not fret; it leads only to evildoing.*

Did you see that? When you lose your composure, when you get down on their fist-pumping, teeth clenching level, there is a greater possibility for you to get engaged in doing evil. How does this work? Get real. You know. A muscular, well-built Christian friend of mine in California will suffice as an apt illustration.

Many years ago, a guy kept cutting him off in L.A. traffic, and then he'd slow down on purpose . . . just to tick off my mild-mannered buddy. Yet, he finally did it one too many times, so my friend did the "Christian" thing. He pulled alongside the guy and motioned for him to pull over, so he did. My very intimidating friend then jumped out of his car and approached the vile, vexing driver as he got out of his car. All it took was one cocky, mouthy statement and the man was laid out on the top hood of his car. With that, my friend quietly walked back to his car and drove off . . . the "victor." Right. Do you see how one evil (taunting another person in traffic, which is rude and wrong), led to a Christian man and a father of several children, exacting "divine" justice on a congested California freeway? Friends, this is not the way to go when you get tired of evil. There is that point you just might cross where your "righteous" anger turns into evil itself. Beware.

With verse 9, David opens up the reason why we should not let anger get the best of us by focusing us on God's eschatological plan for mankind. You will note the tension between the long and short view of life in the ensuing verses.

<sup>9</sup> For evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land. <sup>10</sup> Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more; and you will look carefully for his place and he will not be *there*. <sup>11</sup> But the humble will inherit the land and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.

David first gives us a negative followed by a positive. In the scope of time and in light of God's kingdom plan, as prophesied throughout the Old Testament, we all need to be reminded that "evildoers will be cut off." They seem powerful, almost unstoppable, now but one day they will not even be remembered. You won't even be able to find them when King, Jesus, returns to establish His glorious messianic kingdom on earth. The phrase, "and he will not be there" in Hebrew is most ominous. The "there" is not there in the Hebrew text. Literally it reads "and he will not be," or his earthly existence will cease completely. He or she who thought their wickedness was building an eternal utopia for them and others based on evil masquerading as righteousness or the "right way" will be vaporized because God never designed for them to rule and reign over the earth He created.

Who inherits the earth God fashioned for mankind? Not the mean-spirited, the mockers, the marauders, or the menacing, but those who recognize they are sinners in need of the Savior, those who are humble enough to know they need to wait before His throne for divine assistance to live life as He designed, and who are humble enough to know that they He must increase as they decrease . . . not the other way around. How ironic. Those vicious, vile groups of people who are working overtime to control everything for their own power over the nation and the earth, will not get what they pursue. *Dominion and rulership will be given to God's humble, beleaguered people as He promised and when He returns.* You might need to read that again. This time, let is calm your anger and give you a modicum of inner peace.

A messianic king and a kingdom are woven all through the Old and New Testaments, and could easily serve as the foundation of a major sermonic study. For our limited purposes in studying the Psalms, I can only give you a thumbnail sketch of the King and the Kingdom.

Based on the Abrahamic (Gen. 12), Mosaic (Deuteronomy), Palestinian (Deut. 30), Davidic (2 Sam. 7), and New Covenants (Jer. 30-31), God has promised to bring the Messiah to rule from Jerusalem over His people Israel and the Church. The king will be the virgin born Immanuel, or God with us (Isa. 7:14), who will be from the line of David (2 Sam. 7; Psalm 2; 89). As Isaiah affirms:

<sup>6</sup> For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> Of the increase of *His* government and peace *There will be* no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this (Isa. 9).

Various biblical texts inform us that the seat of His power will be a newly rebuilt and modified Jerusalem:

<sup>1</sup> The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. <sup>3</sup> Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isa. 2).

His kingdom will be centered in His city, and its subjects will consist of regathered and converted Israel (Deut. 30:3-6; Isa. 11:1-12; 14:1-2; Jer. 23:6-8; 32:37-38; 33:7-9; Ezek 37:21-25; Micah 4:6-8), along with, as we learn from Jesus, all those who trust Him as Savior (The Parable of the Owner of a Vineyard, Matthew 21:33-44; The Parable of the Wedding Banquet, Matthew 22:1-14, as two cases in point).

Really, Daniel seven puts this all in perspective.

<sup>25</sup> He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. <sup>26</sup> But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy *it* forever. <sup>27</sup> Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him' (Dan. 7).

The Anti-Christ will gain great power over the lives of saints as we near the end of man's unrighteous rule and reign; however, it will be the Messiah who will put him down (Dan. 2:45; 9:24-27) prior the erection of His long-awaited kingdom headquartered in Jerusalem.

And who, again, will be the subject, the co-rulers with Christ in the ultimate kingdom? The meek and the humble who followed Him. The godless will be nowhere in sight. Will you be there? Will you get hope from this prophetic truth? I do.

In the meantime, what do we deal with? David answers us in verse 12:

<sup>12</sup> The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes at him with his teeth.

Boy, do the wicked plot to silence and sideline the righteous. They who called for acceptance and tolerance are now calling for not accepting those who stand for truth and morality, and talk about intolerance. Now they only tolerate those who do not challenge their godless positions. Ironic, isn't it? So, they scheme and plot constantly, and even grit their teeth in anger at anyone who'd dare oppose their pernicious plans.

How does God respond?

<sup>13</sup> The Lord laughs at him, for He sees his day is coming.

Amusing. God gets a good laugh out of those people who think that they will rule and reign over His planet. He laughs primarily because He can look down the halls of time to see that the day of judgment is, in fact, coming at breakneck speed. It's a day, a terrible moment in time that the godless don't give any time or thought too in their self-absorbed arrogance. But their ignorance or disdain for it will not stop it for God has decreed its arrival to accomplish all of His kingdom goals.

- <sup>15</sup> "For the day of the LORD upon all the nations is near; as you have done, it shall be done to you; your reprisal shall return upon your own head (Obad. 1).
- <sup>18</sup> Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! For what good is the day of the LORD to you? It *will be* darkness, and not light. <sup>19</sup> It *will be* as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him! Or *as though* he went into the house, leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him! <sup>20</sup> Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light? *Is it not* very dark, with no brightness in it (Amos 5)?
- <sup>2</sup> For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape (1 Thess. 5).
- <sup>8</sup> in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, <sup>10</sup> when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you

was believed (2 Thess. 1).

Could God be any clearer? God laughs because He knows that puny power-brokers of today, people who use evil to create their own little kingdoms, will cower when He arrives in glorious judgment (Isa. 2:19; Rev. 6:15).

God laughs because He knows that what wicked people reap they will sow (Prov. 22:8; Hos. 8:7). David says this much in verses 14-15:

<sup>14</sup> The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow to cast down the afflicted and the needy, to slay those who are upright in conduct. <sup>15</sup> Their sword will enter their own heart, and their bows will be broken.

A modern way to say this is known to us all: What goes around comes around. God, who is just, will bring perfect justice when He appears. For all those Christians the godless attempt to slay or do slay verbally, they will in the end be the slayed ones when they fall into the hands of the living God who can destroy a soul in Hades (Matt. 10:28). Talk about *lex talionis*, or an eye for an eye. Justice is coming when the King appears. Are you prepared for that Day? The only way to get prepared is to know the King, Jesus, by faith (John 5:24-25; Rom. 10:9).

The great reversal is coming and this is what saints need to keep their eyes on. This reality is what prompts David to make these final observations in this instructional section:

<sup>16</sup> Better is the little of the righteous than the abundance of many wicked.

This aphorism, which is a wise saying reminiscent of many in the Proverbs (3:14; 8:19; 12:9; 15:16, 17; 16:8, 1; 6, 19; 17:1, 12; 19:1; 22:1; 25:7, 24; 27:5, 10; 28:6), puts the coming reversal in bold relief. It is wiser to have a little in this life by being holy, than to have much and be wicked. This causes me to think of Eddie Van Halen, who died this week at 65. Because of the rowdy, in-your-face, running-with-the-Devil band he founded and played for did so well, he was worth \$100 million when he took his last breath. I wondered when I heard the news if he was ready to stand before God? I wondered if his abundance meant anything at that metaphysical moment? I wondered if all the partying, glitz and glamour, wild stadiums full of people brought him solace at the feet of Christ? I think not if he did not know Christ. All that abundance meant nothing. Far wiser to be godly with less in a godless world than to have more than you can spend in while still rejecting God and God's ways. Again, it's all about the reversal. Poor by earthly standards but rich before God leads to eternal wealth beyond measure. Rich by earthly standards but poor before God leads to eternal poverty (and punishment) beyond calculation.

The coming reversal is further distilled in the ensuing verses:

<sup>17</sup> For the arms of the wicked will be broken, but the LORD sustains the righteous.

<sup>18</sup> The LORD knows the days of the blameless, and their inheritance will be forever.

<sup>19</sup> They will not be ashamed in the time of evil, and in the days of famine they will have abundance. <sup>20</sup> But the wicked will perish; and the enemies of the LORD will be like the glory of the pastures, they vanish—like smoke they vanish away.

What does all this mean? It means God wants you to hold on. He does not want you to give up. He knows what you are going through. He knows how tough the times are. But He will provide for you no matter what, and as for the wicked, they will be like a dry, brittle pasture that one day will just go up in smoke, leaving you to inherit the King and kingdom of the Messiah.

Right now we're being told that the election on November 3 can go south quickly if people don't vote for the right candidate. We're being threatened with civil unrest like never before, and we're seeing civil unrest as never before already. Murder and mayhem are off the charts in many of our big cities as police pull back. People are afraid to eat outside at restaurants, and to even drive their cars on city streets for fear of attack. And folks are buying ammo like there is no tomorrow. If you don't believe me, just try and purchase some on the internet. It's all sold out because people, even God-fearing folks, are armed to the teeth to protect what is theirs. The times do smell of sunset, of lawlessness, and of disorder and chaos.

What are we to do? We are to do what David has taught us. Cool down, live for God, and warn people that the great reversal is just on the proverbial horizon. When the King of Kings appears they can either stand beside Him as a His child or a defeated foe. The choice is yours. I made my choice back in 1967, so I live each day with great hope for what is in store for this old earth. The King is coming. What a great day that will be.

