

Psalm 37:1-6 Teaching – Summary & Study Guide

Summary

This teaching is centred on **Psalm 37**, specifically focusing on the initial six verses to contrast the destinies of the **righteous** and the **wicked**. The speaker explains that the Psalm is an **acrostic**, a literary structure designed to aid **memorization** and signify completeness in the original Hebrew. By referencing biblical figures like **Abraham, David, and Cain**, the text argues that while evildoers may appear to prosper, they are ultimately destined to be "**cut off**" by divine intervention. Listeners are exhorted to avoid **fretting or anger**, which leads only to sin, and instead to **trust patiently** in God's sovereignty. The message concludes that true **faithfulness** involves delighting in the Lord and waiting for a future **eschatological judgment** where the righteous will be vindicated. This spiritual endurance is presented as the path to **inheriting the land** and reflecting God's light for eternity.

Study Guide

This study guide is designed to provide a comprehensive analysis of **Psalm 37:1-6**, drawing on the provided transcript of a teaching that explores the literary structure, linguistic nuances, and biblical parallels of this wisdom psalm.

Definitions of Key Words

- **Acrostic:** A literary form used in Hebrew poetry where each line, verse, or section begins with successive letters of the alphabet. In Psalm 37, David uses the **22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet** in order to structure the stanzas.
- **Fret:** While modern English often equates this with "worry," the Hebrew root implies being "**heated up**". It can also mean to be gnawed at, chewed at, or corroded away.
- **Commit:** Derived from a verb meaning to "**roll away**," such as rolling a stone from the mouth of a well. Contextually, it refers to rolling one's mindset or path onto the Lord.
- **Eschatological:** Referring to a future day of judgment and justice when God will permanently punish evildoers and vindicate the righteous.
- **Reflexive Verb:** A grammatical structure where the subject performs the action upon themselves (e.g., "fret not **yourself**" or "delight **yourself**").

Expansion of Key Points

1. The Purpose of the Acrostic Structure

David arranged Psalm 37 as an acrostic to bring a sense of **order and completeness** to the teaching. Practically, this structure served as a **mnemonic device** to help the Jewish reader memorise the psalm. The speaker notes that such truths were considered so vital they warranted the effort of memorisation for use in both public worship and private meditation.

2. The Command to "Fret Not" (Verses 1-2)

The primary instruction in the first stanza is to avoid getting "worked up" or "heated up" over the success of evildoers.

- **The Warning of Cain:** Cain is the first biblical figure described with the Hebrew word for being "heated up" (angry). His inability to control this internal heat led directly to the murder of his brother.
- **Modern Application:** The speaker identifies modern "evils"—such as gender ideology or illegal immigration—as things that can cause believers to "work themselves up". However, doing so risks leading the believer into evildoing themselves, as "fretting" tends only to evil.

3. The Certainty of Divine Judgment

The psalmist offers a "catalogue of examples" regarding the fate of the wicked.

- **Metaphor of Grass:** Evildoers are compared to grass that soon fades and withers.
- **The "Cut Off" Theme:** The phrase "cut off" or its equivalent appears repeatedly (seven times in the full psalm) to emphasize that the wicked will eventually vanish entirely.
- **The Example of Saul:** David demonstrated his belief in God's judgment by refusing to kill King Saul on two occasions, choosing instead to let God act as the judge.

4. Positive Responses: Trust, Dwell, and Delight (Verses 3-4)

Instead of fretting, the righteous are called to active faithfulness:

- **Dwelling like Abraham:** Abraham is the archetype of one who "dwelled in the land" by faith. He did not take the land by force but waited for God's timing, even when the promise seemed impossible.
- **Delighting in Justice:** "Delighting yourself in the Lord" is often misinterpreted as a guarantee for material desires. In context, the "desires of your heart" refer to a **longing for God's justice** and the end of wickedness on earth.

5. Vindications and the "Noon Day" (Verses 5-6)

When a believer "rolls" their way onto the Lord, God promises to act.

- **Visible Righteousness:** God will bring forth the believer's righteousness "as the light".
- **Connection to Christ and the Kingdom:** This vindication mirrors the words of Daniel 12:3 and Matthew 13:43, where the righteous "shine like the sun" in the future kingdom.

Questions and Answer Key

Questions:

1. What does the speaker suggest is the primary practical reason for the acrostic layout of Psalm 37?
2. How does the Hebrew definition of "fret" change our understanding of the command in verse 1?

3. According to the speaker, what is the danger of "working yourself up" over worldly evils?
4. Why is Abraham used as an example for the command to "dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness"?
5. In the context of Psalm 37:4, what are the "desires of your heart" likely to be?

Answer Key:

1. It was designed to assist with **memorization** of important biblical truths.
2. It moves the meaning from mere "worry" to being "**heated up**" or "gnawed at," implying an internal agitation or anger.
3. Fretting "tends only to evil"; it can cause the believer to become an evildoer themselves.
4. Abraham lived in the promised land as a "foreign land," living in tents and trusting God to provide the inheritance rather than seizing it by force.
5. They are desires for **God's justice**, peace, and the establishment of His visible kingdom on earth.

Exhortations

- **Practice Restraint:** Just as David spared Saul because he was "God's anointed," recognise that God is sovereign over modern authorities. Our role is **patient faithfulness**, not seizing control or seeking personal vengeance.
- **Commit Your Mindset:** When confronted by global or personal wickedness, "roll" your path onto the Lord. Trust that He will act in His perfect timing, just as He did in the days of Noah and David.
- **Focus on Internal Righteousness:** Rather than being consumed by the "outworking of evildoers" in the news, be vigilant against the "wickedness that is carried out by our own flesh".
- **Wait for the King:** Remember that Jesus Christ is the appointed judge who will execute perfect vengeance. Let this assurance allow you to be "**still before the Lord**" and wait patiently for Him.

Don't Fret, Trust: The Wisdom of Psalm 37

A comparison of two opposing paths: avoiding anger over evil and cultivating patient trust in God's justice.

The Path of Fretting: A Warning

'Fret Not' Means Don't Get Heated Up

It's not just worry; it's a consuming anger that can make you become an evildoer.



The Fate of Evildoers is Temporary

They are like grass that quickly fades; God's judgment will "cut them off."



"Refrain from anger and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil."

Psalm 37:8

The Path of Faith: A Command

Trust, Delight, and Commit Your Way to the Lord

Instead of fretting, actively place your trust in God's plan and timing for justice.



Be Like Abraham: Dwell in the Land by Faith

He patiently trusted God's promises without trying to force them to happen himself.



The Righteous Will Be Vindicated and Inherit the Land

Your righteousness will shine like the sun, and God's promise of inheritance is eternal.

