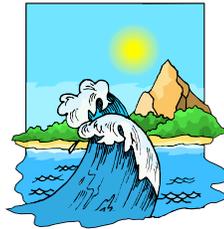


Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

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by
William D. Barrick, Th.D.
Professor of OT, The Master's Seminary



Psalm 36 — From the Depths to the Heights

1.0 Introducing Psalm 36

- Only twice in the Old Testament is “the servant of the LORD” used of David (here and Psalm 18:1).
- Psalms 35, 36, and 37 are related:
 - ▶ All three deal with the divine judgment of wicked people.
 - ▶ Psalm 35:8 contains the prayer that the wicked would fall into destruction; 36:12 declares that “the doers of iniquity have fallen”; and 37:2 confirms that evildoers “will wither quickly like the grass” while 37:9 adds that “evildoers will be cut off.”
 - ▶ All three psalms indicate that the prayers of the righteous will be answered. God will execute His justice. Therefore, the godly need not “fret” over the wicked (37:1, 7, 8).
- Psalm 36 affirms the integrity of God—He will judge the wicked.

2.0 Reading Psalm 36 (NAU)

A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD.

- 36:1** Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart;
There is no fear of God before his eyes.
- 36:2** For it flatters him in his *own eyes*
Concerning the discovery of his iniquity *and* the hatred *of it*.

36:3 The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit;
He has ceased to be wise *and* to do good.

36:4 He plans wickedness upon his bed;
He sets himself on a path that is not good;
He does not despise evil.

36:5	Your lovingkindness,	O LORD, extends	to the heavens,
	Your faithfulness	<i>reaches</i>	to the skies.
36:6	Your righteousness	is like	the mountains of God;
	Your judgments	are <i>like</i>	a great deep.

O LORD, You preserve man and beast.

36:7 How precious is **Your lovingkindness**, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.

36:8 They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.

36:9 For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light.

36:10 O continue **Your lovingkindness** to those who know You,
And Your righteousness to the upright in heart.

36:11 Let not the foot of pride come upon me,
And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.

36:12 There the doers of iniquity have fallen;
They have been thrust down and cannot rise.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 36

3.1 Outline

- I. The Degeneration of the Ungodly (vv. 1-4)
- II. The Dimensions of God's Loyal Love (vv. 5-6)
- III. The Delectableness of God's Loyal Love (vv. 7-9)
- IV. The Defense of the Godly (vv. 10-12)



3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart”
 - The phraseology in the Hebrew occurs only here in the Old Testament.
 - Compare NIV’s translation: “An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked.”
 - The NAU changed “my heart” to “his heart.”

- It is probably better to take “transgression” as the object of “oracle” rather than its subject: “An oracle about the transgression of the wicked is in my heart.” David has revelation from God concerning the ungodly.
- v. 1 “fear of God”
 - This phrase is not the normal Hebrew phrase one might expect.
 - It is literally, “the terror (or, dread) of God.”
 - Not only do the wicked fail to revere God rightly, they don’t even tremble in dread at the thought of His imminent judgment.
 - See Romans 3:18.
- vv. 1-4 Stages of Degeneration
 - 1) Self-deception.
 - 2) Insensitivity to sin.
 - 3) Inability to do good (to not sin).
 - 4) Commitment to and delight in sin.
 - 5) Inability to reject or hate sin.
- vv. 4, 6 Triplets/Tricola
 - The use of three lines instead of two often signals a break—either the end of a section or the start of a new one.
- vv. 5, 7, 10 “Your lovingkindness”
 - “Lovingkindness” = *hesed* = “loyal love” or “unfailing love.”
 - The repetition provides a theme for the psalm.
 - The placement of the repetitions helps signal the starting points of new sections.
- vv. 5-6 “heavens ... skies ... mountains ... deep”
 - The figure of speech used here is merism. By the use of the opposites (heavens > mountains, skies > deep) the psalmist indicates totality.
 - God’s unfailing, loyal love extends to everyone, everywhere.
- v. 6 “the mountains of God”
 - This is the Hebrew way to say that the mountains were tall, mighty, really big.
- v. 6 “judgments”
 - Some translations render the word as “justice.”
 - “His *judgments*—a term which is based on a court’s recorded decisions and therefore comes to mean not only judgments ... but Scripture, as God’s will revealed: see on 18:22; 19:7-10.”—Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 147.



- v. 7 “O God! And the children of men”
 - Compare NIV’s “Both high and low among men.”
 - NIV takes “God” as a reference to the “high” among mankind.

- v. 8 “the river of Your delights”
 - “The paradisiacal connections are even more explicit in the reference to Yahweh’s ‘river of delight’ (*nahal ‘adaneka*). The second word here is the same word (*eden*) that provides the name for the paradisiacal garden from which the four rivers flow to provide life-giving water to the earth (Gen. 2:8-14).”—Gerald A. Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 593.
 - The blessings itemized in these verses, however, are better taken as present, rather than future.

4.0 Singing Psalm 36

Tune:
“When I Survey
the Wondrous
Cross”

High in the heav’ns, eternal God,
Thy goodness in full glory shines;
Thy truth shall break through every cloud
That veils and darkens Thy designs.



Forever firm Thy justice stands,
As mountains their foundations keep;
Wise are the wonders of Thy hands;
Thy judgments are a mighty deep.

Thy providence is kind and large
Both man and beast Thy bounty share;
The whole creation is Thy charge,
But saints are Thy peculiar care.

My God, how excellent Thy grace,
Whence all our hope and comfort spring!
The sons of Adam in distress
Fly to the shadow of Thy wing.

From the provisions of Thy house
We shall be fed with sweet repast;
There mercy like a river flows,
And brings salvation to our taste.

Life, like a fountain, rich and free,
Springs from the presence of the Lord;
And in Thy light our souls shall see
The glories promised in Thy Word.

— Isaac Watts

Psalm 36:5-10

Tune:
“Jesus, the Very
Thought of Thee”

Thy mercy and thy truth, O Lord,
Transcend the lofty sky;
Thy judgments are a mighty deep,
And as the mountains high.

Lord, thou preservest man and beast;
Since thou art ever kind,
Beneath the shadow of thy wings
We may a refuge find.

With the abundance of thy house
We shall be satisfied,
From rivers of unfailing joy
Our thirst shall be supplied.

The fountain of eternal life
Is found alone with thee,
And in the brightness of thy light
We clearly light shall see.

From those that know thee may thy love
And mercy never depart,
And may thy justice still protect
And bless the upright heart.

— Original *Trinity Hymnal*

5.0 Praying Psalm 36

- I praise You for Your love and faithfulness, Lord. [v. 5]
- Father, preserve me in the shadow of Your wings. [vv. 6-7]
- Thank You for delighting my soul in You. [vv. 8-9]
- Continue Your lovingkindness (loyal love) to me, Lord. [v. 10]



6.0 Applying Psalm 36

- The wicked are irretrievably lost and degenerate. Only the grace of God can save them.
- God’s love extends to everyone everywhere.
- Being in fellowship with God and in His presence involves the highest of spiritual delights.