

Sunday Night Message

August 25, 2013

Psalm 37 – Fret Not Thyself

Series – The Psalms

Text – Psalm 37

Introduction

This psalm is another acrostic psalm, and was written in David's later years (verse 25).

The word "wicked" is found fourteen times in this psalm.

This psalm deals with common frustration that is felt by God's people regarding the prosperity of wicked people, and the seeming lack of judgment leveled by God against the wicked. Why do bad people not get what's coming.

Similar verses:

*"Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long. For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off."
(Proverbs 23:17-18)*

*"Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked; For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out."
(Proverbs 24:19-20)*

See also Psalm 73

Jeremiah asked God the same thing:

"Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" (Jeremiah 12:1)

The people of God in the New Testament were looking for earthly, material blessings as a sign of the blessing of God. Today, we do not look for those things, We are looking for spiritual, and eternal blessings – we live by faith in what will be. The Israelites were expecting their reward in the earth. They are

still looking forward to an earthly kingdom, which we know as the Millennial Kingdom, where God will bless them abundantly.

It seemed completely inconsistent with what they knew about God to witness the unrighteous seemingly receiving the blessings that were reserved for God's people. God's great reminder to these folks in David's day, and to us today as well, is to just wait. God will take care of it in His time. God will reward the righteous, and also condemn the wicked on His timetable, not ours. The prosperity of the wicked can only be seen in the short term, because in the long run it can be seen that they do not prosper at all.

The phrase "fret not thyself" is found 3 times in this psalm. The phrase means don't get angry, or stressed out about something. It literally means to not get agitated, or heated. God is telling His people to "chill out".

This phrase is found in only one other passage in the Bible, which was in the passage that we just read in Proverbs 24.

I Fret Not Thyself Because of Evildoers (v. 1)

"Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity." (Psalms 37:1)

Notice that fretting, or getting angry with the bad people is associated here with envy. (see also Proverbs 24:19 above)

"Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them. For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief." (Proverbs 24:1-2)

We shouldn't envy them because their time is short. Their happiness is only temporary; ours is eternal.

God says five times in this psalm that the wicked will be "cut off" (vs. 9, 22, 28, 34, 38)

"Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways." (James 1:9-11)

Notice instead what we are commanded to do:

- A Trust (v. 3)
- B Delight (v. 4)
- C Commit (vs. 5 – 6)
- D Rest (v. 7)

II Fret Not Thyself Because of the Prosperity of the Wicked (v. 7)

The prosperity of the wicked can only, at best, last through this life; and even though they may be prospering materially, they are probably not prospering in other areas: they may be very miserable people.

III Fret Not Thyself To Do Evil (v. 8)

Sometimes our anger at and envy of wicked people can cause us to decide to join them. God says, “don’t do it!”

The remainder of the psalm contains many comparisons between the godly and the wicked; and it also foretells of the consequences that face the ungodly. It may seem like they are on top of the world now, but just wait a while. There are also many promises given here to the godly.

The great encouragement to the people of God in this passage is found in v. 34:

"Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it." (Psalms 37:34)

"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD." (Psalms 27:14)

"Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee." (Proverbs 20:22)

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31)