

Do Not Fret

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Preacher: Joshua Winters

- [0 : 0 0] All right, well, I know I said we were going to be back in John, and we will be, but for today, just today, I had it on my heart to speak on something a little different.
- So if you have your Bible with you, please open it up to Psalm chapter 37. Psalm chapter 37. If you didn't bring a Bible, you can find one in front of you in the seat there.
- We've got some pew Bibles, and there won't be any slides or it won't be on the screen this morning, so hopefully you can follow along. I'm going to read the first 11 verses, Psalm 37 of David.
- Do not fret because of those who are evil, or be envious of those who do wrong. For like the grass, they will soon wither. Like green plants, they will soon die away.
- Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.
- [1 : 0 7] Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in him, and he will do this. He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun.
- 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.
- Refrain from anger, and turn from wrath. Do not fret. It leads only to evil. For those who are evil will be destroyed, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land.
- A little while, and the wicked will be no more. Though you look for them, they will not be found. But the meek will inherit the land, and enjoy peace and prosperity.
- These are the words of David. Not David the youngster, but David when he was old.
- [2 : 1 3] In verse 25, he says, I was young, and now I am old. And so he is speaking out of not just an idyllic view of the world, but out of personal experience.
- He is speaking about what do we do when we look around, and in our country, and in our world, we see the wicked, those who don't give a rip about God, having their way, prospering, succeeding, flourishing.
- What do we do in times like that? And David speaks from experience. He has lived through those kinds of situations.
- You'll remember his days on the run, when King Saul was in power, hunting him, trying to take him out, spreading lies about him.
- You'll remember the days when David, even though he had been a king for quite a while, was chased off his own throne by his son, and had to flee for his life.
- [3 : 2 8] David knows very well what it's like to live in days when the wicked, those who do not care about God and his ways, are flourishing, are prospering, are succeeding.
- So these are his words of advice to us. These are really God's words through David to us. And this is what David says.

In times like those, do not fret because of those who are evil, or be envious of those who do wrong. Down in verse 7 again, do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

There's a couple words I just want to highlight there. Evil and wicked. When we hear those words, we tend to think of especially bad, like very bad, like the Hitlers.

But in the Old Testament, in the wisdom writings, it doesn't have that same sense. Wicked generally refers to those who do wrong as just the general pattern of life.

[4 : 39] Those who don't care about God or fear him, who are living to please themselves, who they maybe know what God commands and requires, but no, I'm not going to live like that.

I'm going to do what I want to do. So don't think only the Hitlers, only the worst of tyrants. David is speaking about more than just those people.

Generally, it's those who do wrong in verse 1. It's those who, he mentions quite a few things that they do in this.

The worst of them, verse 14, they draw the sword and bend the bow to bring down the poor and needy. He mentions how they gnash their teeth at the righteous.

They speak what is evil. They say things that are hurtful and damaging and all kinds of things. In the Old Testament writings, there's kind of these two categories that are often represented, the wicked and the righteous.

[5 : 48] It's not the especially bad and the especially good. It's really just those who fear God and by faith are seeking to obey Him and those who don't fear God and are going their own way and doing what displeases Him.

So that's who David is talking about. And what does he say? In verse 1, he says, Do not fret because of them. Do not be envious of those who do wrong.

Now, I know when I look around and I see people doing things that are wrong, I don't envy them in the sense that I want to do what they're doing, but I might be tempted to envy how they seem to be able to do those things with freedom and seem to be able to just get away with it.

And wouldn't it be nice if I was in that position where I could do what I thought was right and I wouldn't feel that people are saying, stop talking about that.

Stop doing that. Do not fret. Do not be envious of those who do wrong. Why?

[7 : 03] He gives us a reason in verse 2. He says, For like the grass, they will soon wither. Like green plants, they will soon die away.

So think back to earlier this year in your yard. We had that nice rain that came in the spring and then what happened?

The grass was green and then it got less green and less green and before you know it, it was burnt to a crisp in some of your yards. Yellow. Crunchy.

Dead. That's the picture here. Don't worry. Don't fret. Don't be anxious because of those who are evil, those who do wrong.

Why? Because like the grass, withered and died in our yards this summer, that's going to be their fate. They may seem to be flourishing and prospering right now as we look around the world, as we look at people in positions of power in our nation, but it's not going to last long.

[8 : 11] It's very temporary. So what do we do in these kind of situations? And I want to make this practical. I mean, David had people that he had in mind when he wrote this in his day, but who are these people in our day?

I'm not going to name any names, but I think that we have all been tempted in the past year, have we not? To fret?

To be frustrated? Even angry? As we look around in our country and in our world and we see the things that are going on and we see people pushing agendas that are not good, not right, unjust, and we see those people who we believe are standing up for what is good and what is right, we see them being silenced and pushed aside.

Very easily, we could look out at our world today and conclude that those who don't give a rip about God are flourishing and prospering. They're having their way, they're having their day.

What do we do in situations like we're in right now in our world when this is the norm? David has a number of instructions, a number of encouragements, advice.

[9 : 39] Verse 3, trust in the Lord and do good. Trust in Yahweh, the Creator.

Have confidence in Him in the midst of this world and its situation. Is your confidence in Him?

Do good. Carry on doing what is right and what is good, even if it's unpopular. Dwell in the land, he says, and enjoy safe pasture.

Let's remember that this was written to Israel back in the day. I don't know about you, but in some of the days where some of those things were going on, the temptation might have been there.

Man, I got to get out of here. This is not good. Maybe go down to Egypt. I don't know. The grass is always greener on the other side. Don't run away from it, he says.

[10 : 48] Dwell in the land. Stay there. Trust in the Lord. Do good and keep doing it. And then he says this in verse 4.

Take delight in the Lord. I have to admit, this is one of the strangest things. This is the thing that he says and tells us to do that I did not expect to come.

When people are prospering and flourishing who don't give a rip about God and they're having their way, they're having success, what's the antidote to getting frustrated and worried about all that and angry about all that?

David says, delight yourself in the Lord. Take delight in the Lord. Maybe there's a little part of you that's hearing that and saying, don't tell me how to feel about what's going on.

But I've got some news for you. This is not the first time or the only time that God actually commands us about how to feel.

[11 : 59] There are many times in his word and yes, feelings are a response to what's going on, what's happening, but at the same time, yes, we are responsible for how we respond.

We are charged to manage what goes on in our hearts. Fear not. Do not worry. Do not be anxious.

Do not fret. Trust and hear. Take delight in the Lord. If there's nothing else you hear this morning, may you hear this.

The antidote to frustration and anger and worry in times like we're living in is this. Take delight in the Lord.

Think about that. What does that mean? It means you've got to get your eyes onto Him. What is delightful about Him?

[13 : 06] What has He done that is delightful? What has He said that's delightful? What about Him is wonderful and glorious and beautiful and delightful?

Get your eyes on that. and maybe a little bit off of the stuff that is going on in our world. And there's a promise that comes with that.

David says if you do that He will give you the desires of your heart. Now some people see here a promise that if you delight yourself in the Lord He'll give you whatever you want.

That's not what David is saying. He's saying delight yourself in the Lord turn your heart towards Him and He will give you the desires of your heart. Talking about things like joy peace true joy true peace He will meet the longings of your soul that He created you to have that are good that are right.

That's quite a promise. verse 5 he goes on he says commit your way to the Lord. What does it mean to commit your way to the Lord? My mind goes to the story of Hezekiah enemy army knocking on the doorstep over a hundred thousand troops ready to barge down and sends a letter to Hezekiah saying we're going to rip you guys to shreds if you don't surrender.

[14 : 47] We did the same to all the other countries and their gods were not able to save from my hand said Sennacherib and your God will be no different.

So what did Hezekiah do? He took the letter and he went into the temple of the Lord and laid it out before him and he said God look at this hear what he said this is my situation have mercy on us and act and intervene to save us.

That's what it means to commit your way to the Lord. It just means to bring your situation to Him and trust it to His care. We need to do that actively with what's going on in our world today to bring that to God's care to ask for Him to intervene.

That's what Thursday night prayer meetings are for. Commit your way to the Lord trust in Him and He will do this.

He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn your vindication like the noonday sun.

[16 : 00] Wow. There's a lot there. There's enough there to meditate on and pray about for hours. I don't even have time to unpack it all this morning. but there will come a day when the people of God who lived for the Lord and did what was right everything that they have done will be the thing that people see the most.

Their reward will shine like the noonday sun. Right now it may look dark in our world. That's all we see. We look at the news.

We look at social media. We look at Facebook. But there's coming a day when that will not be the main thing that people see. That will fade away like the night fades away.

And what we instead see is what God is doing with His people. The people that persevered through that did what is good did what is right even when it was hard.

That will be the most visible thing. But we might think to ourselves so I just follow these instructions do not fret trust take delight commit my way to the Lord and everything's going to be better right?

[17 : 21] Is that the promise? Verse 7 Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him.

It's not an overnight thing. This is not a guarantee that if we just commit our ways to the Lord He'll just fix our problem or our situation instantly. David says be still wait patiently there is need for patience and this is hard.

it means that we will continue to live in days when the wicked prosper and flourish sometimes before God's intervention comes before God's vindication arrives.

Verse 7 continuing on Do not fret when people succeed in their ways when they carry out their wicked schemes refrain from anger and turn from wrath do not fret it leads only to evil.

These are really the words that caught my attention to this psalm the most when I first was reading this. Three times David says do not fret back up in verse 1 in verse 7 and then again in verse 8 do not fret do not fret do not fret look at the way our world is when people who don't give a rip about God are having their day and do not get bent out of shape about that don't be anxious and upset and frustrated and angry about that says David and he gives us some reasons why verse 8 it leads only to evil.

[19 : 24] I had to really think about this not just that it doesn't do us any good to worry or fret but it actually leads only to evil. It leads to us when we let that fester in our hearts it leads to us saying and doing things that displease and dishonor God.

he gives a second reason verse 9 for those who are evil will be destroyed but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land a little while and the wicked will be no more though you look for them they will not be found but the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity why shouldn't we fret why shouldn't we get upset why shouldn't we be angry when we look at what people are doing in our world today this is the big reason David gives those who are evil will be destroyed and it will happen in just a little while God has allowed them for a time to have their day to prosper to flourish in a sense but this will not last long

God's not going to let them get away with it their time is coming in verse 12 the wicked may plot against the righteous they may gnash their teeth at them but the Lord laughs at the wicked for he knows their day is coming and I don't think this is a laughter in the sense that he thinks it's funny that they're wicked it's more of a laughter in the sense that they think they are going to get away with it and God knows so beyond a shadow of a doubt that that is not that's not how it will be that it's almost as if it's funny to him no you will not get away with it their day is coming now we think of those people in our world and we don't want them to be destroyed we want them to turn to the Lord and to be saved but this is sometimes

I think the reminder we need that God will bring justice in this world he will do what is right and undo the plans the schemes that wicked people have been carrying out generation to generation he will bring a fitting resolve to those things they will not get away with it in a little while in a little while the good news and the promise is that the righteous those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land in verse 11 the meek or the humble we might say will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity those who belong to God those who have put their faith in Jesus and are seeking to obey him from the heart even when it's difficult they are the ones who will inherit the land that was true in the days of

Israel as a general principle but that's the truth of the big story of God there's coming a day when he's going to make everything new new heavens earth who will inherit that place and live in that place the righteous the meek the humble those who delight in the Lord and I love what it says in verse 10 it says a little while and the wicked will be no more though you look for them they will not be found imagine that in our day it seems hard to see anything but the wicked and what they're doing what they're getting away with it seems but there's coming a day when you will look for people like that people that lack integrity that are doing schemes and plans on the side that are canceling people and saying things that are not true about people you'll look for people like that but you won't find because they'll be gone the wicked will be destroyed and all that will remain are the people of

[24 : 20] God to live with him forever in his kingdom in peace in prosperity verse 23 let's skip down to there again the Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him though he may stumble he will not fall for the Lord upholds him with his hand that delighting is so important the one who delights himself in the Lord this is the Lord's promise not that we won't go through difficulty not that we won't trip and stumble at times but that even though we may stumble we will not fall his hand will be there to support us and to carry us through all of that what a wonderful promise verse 34 much of what's in this psalm is the same thing the same encouragements said in different ways but I want to just read this verse here in verse 34 hope in the

Lord and keep his way he will exalt you to inherit the land when the wicked are destroyed you will see it we live in tough times we just saw the results of the election disappointing easy maybe to get frustrated be angry wonder about different possibilities that could have happened instead that would make things better most of us have probably heard about or read about people in various parties getting sidelined and pushed out because some of them believe in the values that are in God's word David's message to us is don't worry about that don't fret about it put your trust in the Lord he will take care of it and one day those who are wicked will be destroyed and you will see it that day is coming be still and wait patiently for it we may think of the

COVID situation feels like it's been forever since all of this came into our attention I don't know what the actual months is but it's getting on towards two years now a lot of frustration a lot of worry a lot of upsetness about the things that are going on and the various ways this has become politicized and so and so is over here is trying to further their agenda through all of this and oh man let me encourage you with the words that David gives don't fret about it don't worry about it commit that stuff to the Lord keep trusting in the Lord and keep doing good the Lord's going to put it all right very soon when he returns I want to end this morning just with a time of prayer and actually do that together as a church so join me let's pray

Lord it's amazing how you can speak to us thousands of years before we even go through what we're going through and what you say is so timely it's just what we need to hear and we confess and we admit that we have been frustrated we have been angry even at times we have been worrying and fretting please forgive us please help us to trust you completely to wait patiently let us know your presence with us in these days fill our hearts with peace show us more of who you are give us those reasons to delight draw our attention to yourself we long for that joy that

David talks about here help us to fix our hope firmly on what you have said is the end of the story Lord and we just acknowledge and confess to you that if we get to share in that it's only because of what Jesus has done for us it's not because we're righteous in ourselves it's because you have made us righteous through him we give you praise and glory for that that wonderful gift in his name amen