

Source

First eleven vs of Ps. 37. Fret not thyself. I want to speak to you this morning and the next and the next on the subject WHEN THE UPRIGHT GET UPTIGHT. And I have been intrigued by this Psalm because of the admonition of the author. Fret not thyself, again and again several times in this scripture you have that admonition, fret not thyself. Now the implication is of course since it is addressed to believers that they will find themselves fretting. The word fret means to heat thyself, to get all hot and bothered. It means to get in a stew, to be filled with anxiety. To get pensive and tense and irritable. Fret not thyself. And do not be envious, and that word envious means to glow like a fire. And it has the idea, as I said, you combine these two things together and it has the idea of getting all hot and bothered about a situation. And the remarkable thing as I have indicated is that this is addressed to believers. Now I don't find anything in the Word of God that tells me I will not find myself in fretful situations. And I realize that there are a number of people today that are preaching and teaching that the fulness of the HS is a vaccine against problems and that if we'll just know how to trust God and be filled w/ the Spirit that we'll always be healthy and wealthy, but the only thing wrong with that is that it's wrong. I don't find anything in the Word of God that indicates that I'm going to be granted some kind of heavenly immunity from problems. Now we live in a fretful world. We live in a world whose situations and circumstances and pressures of life have a ~~wxy~~ tendency to cause us to get hot and bothered. To be filled w/fretfulness and I for one do not believe that a Xian is any less exposed to those pressures than is a non-Xian. As a matter of fact I think he is under more pressure. He is under more pressure and the reason is because of the spiritual stance he takes in life. You see a pig is under very little pressure in a mud puddle. He doesn't feel tense, he's not worried about getting spotted. But a lamb would feel a little bit of pressure in a mud puddle because that is not native to his nature. And when you take a believer and set him down in the midst of a godless world and you put a holy man in the midst of unholiness and pure in the midst of impurity, you have a pressurized situation. So the Xian

as a matter of fact, far from being less pressured and less vulnerable to the fretfulness of this age is even under more pressure and is just as susceptible to it as is the unbeliever. Now of course the great difference is that because of his position in Christ, he has hidden resources on which he can draw that the rest of the world does not have access to. But he is going to find himself in a fretful situation. And perhaps that national pastime is fretting.

Now you know as I was studying this it occurred to me that he said fret not thyself. That was interesting. I wrote up in the margin of my Bible, and I don't really know how to say it, but I wrote: I said we fret ourselves. Fret not thyself. Friend, if you are fretting today, if you are hot and bothered, you have done it to yourself. And you can't blame the world, you can't really blame circumstances, you can't really blame the situation. If you are fretting, if you are hot and bothered, if you are pensive, if you're on edge about something, if you're anxious and worried about something, you've done it to yourself. You fret yourself. And so the Psalmist comes and says, fret not thyself. Fret not thyself. Do not allow yourself to get hot and bothered. And I have an idea I'm speaking to people this morning who may be fretting. There may be a situation in your life personally, or maybe in your church life back home, home life, the job situation, that is causing you to fret a little bit - to worry and be anxious. Well the Word of God says not to do it. Now that's pretty useless advice unless there is attached to it the way to keep from fretting. You know the marvelous thing about the Bible is it always solutions to the problem. It never gives this simple useless advice --- I was in Wichita, Ks. sometime ago and I was watching the news on television and right after that there came the Word From Unity. You've seen that, haven't you? The Word From Unity. And it's a little semi-religious talk by some celebrity, and this particular little word from unity

was on the word JOY. And the lady speaking mentioned how important joy was. Everybody had to have ~~XX~~ joy, and then came this statement. If you have lost your joy, get it back. And that was it. And I kept waiting. I said well that's great, wonderful - tell me how do I go about getting it back? Tell me how I go about recapturing that joy that I've lost? But that was so typical of non-Christian religions they can only offer a cheer up type of advice but they do not know how to prescribe. They can diagnose but not prescribe. Well the Bible is never guilty of that. And so if the Psalm opens w/ this matter of not fretting you can rest assured he's going to tell you how to overcome it.

You know the interesting thing is, this Psalm opens w/ fretfulness and ends w/ restfulness, and that's where we all want to be. Now what I want to deal w/ this morning is this: I want to talk to ~~X~~ you this morning about the SOURCE of this, tomorrow morning the SIN of it and the next morning, the SOLUTION TO IT. This morning I want us to look at WHY THE UPRIGHT GET UPTIGHT and I think you'll find that there are basically three reasons revealed in this Psalm why you and I fret why we give ourselves over~~X~~ to worry and anxiety and fretfulness.

The first one is this: the upright get uptight because OF THE INJUSTICES OF LIFE -- because of the inequities of life. Now notice what he says in vs. 1, fret not thyself because of evildoers neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. Now glance over in verse 7, he says "fret not thyself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. " Now the core, the cause, the source of this fretfulness, this anxiety ~~XX~~ is the fact that here are evil men, wicked men, who have no regard for man nor God and they are constantly devising wicked things and being successful in it. And they are prospering in their way. AND the Psalmist recognizes that there are injustices in

life. There are certain inequities in life. Let's face it folks, life is not always fair. Things aren't always turning out the way they ought to turn out. Things don't always turn out the way we thought God wanted them to turn out. And I don't know how many times as I have visited in the homes of people who have been struck by some tragedy and they've said something like this, "I don't understand why this happened to me." Why me? I've tried to serve God, I've tried to live a Christian life, I've given Him everything that I have, and everything that I am, I don't understand why has this happened to me.

Sometime ago I received a letter from a couple in Memphis, Tn. And they'd heard about a tragedy in our own lives and they wrote and here is what they said. They said, "We don't understand how something like this could happen to somebody like you." And they went on to explain, "we know that you have given your life to the Lord and you have given your life to the preaching of the gospel and we believe that you are a godly man, and a fine Christian man, and we do not understand how something like this could happen to you." Now what was bothering them is that they had some similar situations in their own life and they were anticipating that they would turn out just perfectly. But yet when they saw what had happened in my own life it threw them into tailspin and suddenly they became fretful and anxious because if this could happen to somebody like me then certainly it could happen to somebody like them. And let's face it folks, life is not always fair. There are a lot of things in this world that are not fair. And it reminds me of the Psalmist writing in the 73rd psalm when he says, "God is good to Israel but as for me my feet were almost slipped and I became envious at the wicked." You see it's not a matter of envying the sinfulness of the wicked but it's a matter of envying the success of the wicked. You see I know wicked people, I know wicked

who seem to have ~~x~~ the Midas touch in their lives. They don't seem to be bothered by the same things you and I are botyhered by. They seem to breeze through life. I read a chapter in a book the other day, "Leave Us Happy Heathen Alone" and it was a book about evangelism and it was protesting against this idea that everybody who is lost is miserable and this one man was saying, listen leave us happy heathen alone. I'm happy - I'm perfectly happy in the way I am living. I don't believe the man was lying. There are a lot of folks~~x~~ that are just as happy as they ~~an~~ be living like they are. Now somewhere along the line we acquired the idea that if a man gaven himself over to God compleely and totally that all of life would be filled w/ sunshine and blue skies and his pathy would be littered w/ rose petals and so when he begins to discover that it is not so and while he is going through great upheavals, emotional, physical in his own life and over here is the world, this man, this woman, ungodly, uncaring about the things of God and all of life seems to be falling in place for them - friends, sometimes that'll shake you up. It'll shake you up. The inequities of life - things aren't fair. It's not right, it's not right that a man who serves God and gives God the best that he has and then the Lord allows certain things ~~yo~~ come into his life. This'll cause you to be filled w/ anxiety. You see it's not always easy to trust the Lord because your experience has taught you that things don't always turn out the way you thought they would. You know now that you are vulnerable. You know now that you are susceptible ~~to~~ problems, to tragedies, to disappointments. And so when you find yourself in this kind of situation there is the possibility, my dear friends of fretting.

The second cause of this fretfulness is the

INACTIVITY OF GOD - the inaction of God. The fact that God seems to be apparently indifferent to the whole situation. Now

the Psalmist goes through here and he says, don't be envious of the wicked who prosper in their way and who bring evil devices to pass. In other words, these evil men are prospering. God seemingly is ~~indifferent~~ indifferent to the entire situation and He's doing nothing at all about it. The inactivity of God. Now you will find this is one of the primary causes in the Bible of men falling into panic.

For instance let me read the favorite one of mine over in Hab. chapter 1, Hab the prophet - now Hab. the prophet was facing a twofold situation. First of all inside the city the people of God were living in violence and injustice and immorality. And on the outside of the city the enemy, the Chaldeans were laying seige to them so that destruction was inevitable and imminent. Now notice what Hab. the prophet says, vs 1 - 3 a-- In other words the prophet is saying, Lord, why, why is it that you allow these things to happen. Why is it I, as a godly man, have to sit here and see all of this wickedness and behold all of this grief. How long am I going to cry unto you and you are not going to do anything about it? He says, why, why doest thou show me this/^{for}spoiling and violence are before me and there are those that raise up strife and contention therefore the law is slack and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth. Oh that's a great statement. The wicked compass about the righteous. The wicked had surrounded the righteous and they are about to win the day. And frind, you pick up your newspaper and that looks like it was written this morning, right out of the morning newspaper. The wicked are surrounding the righteous and the righteous can hold up their hands and raise up their voice and say this isn't right, this isn't right, this isn't right, but the wicked just seem to be carrying the day. And God just seems to be sitting there doing nothing. The inactivity

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You will find that same problem in the experience of Gideon. In Judges chapter 6, you remember Gideon is there threshing wheat by the winepress, hiding from the Midianites, his people are oppressed. The Midianites are oppressing them. And in vs. 12 it says vs 13... Now that's a good question. If the Lord is with us, if the Lord is with this, then why have these things befallen us, and where are all His miracles? Now folks I propose that he has a pretty good question. And I have an idea you and I have asked that question. You say, the Lord is with us. God loves me. You say Christ indwells me by His Spirit. You say His hand is upon me - you say my life is in the palm of His hand and He knows my arising from my sittings and He knows everything about me. He cares for me. If that is so, where are His miracles? and why have these things befallen us? The inactivity of God. And I have news for you today folks there will be times when it will be, when it will look as though God is doing absolutely nothing.

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Of course, this was the case w/ Mary & Martha. When Lazarus fell sick they sent word to Jesus and said, Lord, we need you to come, come now. Of course it's always an emergency situation anytime we call the Lord. And we say, Lord, you've got to come right now. You've got to come right now. And the Bible says that Jesus deliberately tarried, deliberately tarried. And it says in vs. 14, "then said Jesus..... Now look at what He says next - vs. 15 -- isn't that amazing? Mary and Martha said, "Lord", when they met Him - you know when Jesus arrived, Mary and Martha met Him and they both said, "MaSter, if you had been here this would not have happened." Master if you had been here this would not have happened. And you'll notice that both of them said it at different times. Mary and Martha met Jesus at different times and they both said the same thing. Now friend, when you meet two different people at two different places at two different times

and they say to you the exact same thing, you know they have been together talking it over. And actually this was a complaint. They were registering a complaint. They said, "Master, if you had been here this would not have happened. We called you, we told you Lazarus was sick and we thought you loved him and loved us and we don't understand. AND I can see Mary & Martha sitting in that gloom shrouded home after the funeral saying, "what happened to Jesus? Why didn't He come? Why didn't He answer? We called and we sent for Him and yet He didn't come. And so when they see Him, they said, "Master, if you had been here this wouldn't have happened." Have you ever said that to the Lord? Maybe you have not said it in those words, but in some way or another there has been in your heart - if the Lord had done what I asked Him to do, if He had followed what I had given Him to do, & if He had answered my prayer this would not have happened. And yet the Lord said, "I am glad that I was not there." Isn't that interesting? I am glad that I was not there. And Mary & Martha were filled w/ disbelief and discouragement and despair because of the apparent inactivity of God.

Well, the third cause and source of this fretfulness is our IGNORANCE OF GOD'S WAYS -- the ignorance of how God works. Now I want to tell you something and I know there is a danger in oversimplifying - and I do not mean to be simplistic, but I do have an idea that most of these things that we ~~xxxx~~ believe are so complex are really in the final analysis, very simple. I would like to simply say this morning, the primary reason for your fretfulness and anxiety and worry is the fact that you have ~~xxxx~~ misinterpreted God. You have misinterpreted the inactivity of God and the injustices of life. You see the fact of the matter is God is always working. When Hab. said "Lord, how long will I cry unto you, Lord, why aren't you doing anything- the Chaldeans are about to overrun us. Lord, why aren't you doing anything? And in verse 5 God says, "I am working a work in your day

which you will not believe. In other words, God said all right, Hab. you want to know what I'm doing? I'll tell you but you are not going to like it. And you're not going to believe it. I'll tell you something - it'll be a wonder, it'll be a thing of amazement to you and you won't believe it." Well, Lord what are you doing. ~~XXXXXXXX~~ The Chaldeans are about to overcome --what are you doing. He said, "I'm raising up the Chaldeans." I'm working. But Lord, they are the enemy. They are also my servants. And I'm raising them up. They're going to come in like a herd of wild buffalo and stampede and trod down everything but the just will survive by trusting in me. I am working.

You see Gideon could not see any apparent manifestation of the working of God but He was working. He's always working. Jesus - to Mary & Martha was totally impassive and indifferent, but He said, "I work and my Father works even until now, and did not I tell you that if you would just believe you'd see the glory of God." He's always working. He's always working.

Have you ever watched Walter Cronkite on TV - he always sign off w/ this statement, "And that's the way it is." I heard ^s a preacher say one day he'd like to edit that a little bit and say, No, that's just the way it seems to be." That's just the way it looks. That's just the way it appears. Now listen, folks, you and I have got to understand that what we see is not always what we get. And that God is working and the basic cause of our lack of faith and our anxiety is we we don't understand the ways of God.

Now let me tell you two things: first of all, God is working but He is working on a different time level. He's working on a different time level. Now the psalmist says that "fret not thyself because of evildoers. Don't get all hot and bothered about these evildoers - don't become envious of their ways and of their prosperity.

Notice what he said in v. 8 , 9 rather--- for evildoers shall be cut off but those that wait upon the Lord shall inherit the earth, for yet a little while and the wicked shall not be, yea thou shalt diligently consider his place and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. He says the wicked will be cut off. And those that wait, those that wait, those that wait upon the Lord will inherit the earth. God is working on a different time level. Somebody gave us a clock and on this clock there is a motto written, it hangs in our kitchen, it says "God's Timing is Perfect." And it would be interesting for you to study the timing of God in the Bible. Friends, the Lord is never late. He's always right on time. Of course He's never early either. And that's one reason we get uptight. He waits until the proper moment - in the fulness of time God sent forth His Son. He's working on a different time level and the most difficult thing for a believer to do is to wait. As a matter of fact the Hebrew word for wait means to be in agony. And one of the most agonizing things that a believer can do is to wait for God, wait for God and not be pressured into acting in a wrong and unchristian way. Dr. Phillip Brooks, that great preacher of another generation, was one day pacing angrily back and forth in his study and a friend walked in and saw him ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ pacing back and forth like a caged tiger and he said, "Dr. Brooks, what's the matter." Dr. Brooks said, "I'll tell you what's the matter, I'm in a hurry and God isn't." And as you study the gospels you'll never find Jesus Christ in a hurry. Never getting uptight, never getting in a haste, never getting hot and bothered, never saying, hurry, we've got to do this. He seems to walk, not indifferently, but He seems to walk leisurely through the will of God for His life. Folks, God is working on a different time ~~XXXXXX~~ level. The Lord doesn't operate by my watch or my calendar. And you and I are going to have to learn to wait for the Lord. One of my favorite Psalms is Ps. 130 - he talks about out of the depths have I cried unto the Lord. And ~~he~~ he says that they that wait upon the Lord are like those who wait for the sun. I like that. That shows me two things. #1, friends, you're going to have to wait for the sun. You can't hurry it up. You cannot hurry it up. The sun does not rise by your watch. You say, I'm going to set my watch ahead a few hours and trick that sun into coming up early. You can't rush the sunrise, friend, you're going

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to have to wait for it. There's something else - brother, it always rises. It always rises. Anyone who waits for the sunrise never waits in vain. And I have news for you this morning friend, I do not care how desperate the situation may be, I do not care how agonizing the waiting may be, you who wait for the Lord do not wait in vain. You do not wait in vain.

I want to illustrate that w/ this little thing. Sometime ago I was to fly in home - Dallas - and my wife was to meet me. And she went out to the airport, the plane was supposed to have been in about 12 o'clock and she went out to the airport and walked in and the plane wasn't in and she went up to the man at the counter and she said, "I want to find out about flight so and so, when is it due to arrive." And the man said, "Well I'm sorry it's late and we don't know when it will be in." And so she went back out to the car and sat for about 15 minutes and came back in and said, "I'm inquiring about flight so and so, when will it be in?" And the man said, "Well, I'm sorry mam we don't have any information on when that plane is going to arrive." And it bothered her somewhat because he wasn't too helpful and seemed to be a little evasive and you know one time my wife went to meet me at an airport and right as she drove up a plane crashed --missed the runway -- and she just knew it was mine, because mine was late and that one was right when mine was supposed to be landing, and ever since then, she's been, you know - you get nervous about these things. And ~~she~~ so she came back in a little bit later and she said, listen - I'm waiting, it's been about an hour now, she said, "I'm waiting on this flight so and so and I want to know, when is it going to arrive.?" And he said, "I'm sorry we don't have any information on when it will arrive." She said ~~WXX~~ " Well when did it leave, did it leave on time." He said, "I'm sorry we don't have any information about that." Well now boy she is worried now and she knows --she goes back out to the car and sits there and about 15 minutes later she comes back in and she says, "Listen, I'm inquiring

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about flight so and so," but she said, " I don't want to know when it's going to arrive and I don't want to know if it left on time," she said, "can you tell me one thing?" He said, "what's that?", she said, "Is it in the air?" And he said, "Yes m'am, we can tell you that, it's in the air." She said, "Good, that's all I want to know. You see, you may not know when it left and you may not know when it arrives, but if you know its in the air you can rest. And that's what God is saying. "They that wait for the Lord." You know sometimes I say, "Lord, when are you going to arrive?" He says, "I'm sorry I can't give you that information" "Well, Lord, when did you start this?" "I can't give you that information." Well, Lord could you just tell me one thing - are you in the air?" He says, "~~XXXX~~ Yes, son, I'm in the air. I'm on the way." God works on a different ~~XXXX~~ time level my friend. And He may not arrive according to your little schedule but I have news for you, He's in the air. He's on the way.

Now there's one other thing. Not only ~~XX~~ does God work on a different time level, but He also works on a different value level. You see the Lord has a different standard of values than we have. Which is really the basis of a lot of our problems. The things that we value most, the Lord sometimes places hardly any value on at all. God is working on a different value level. You say, what do you mean? Well you see He values character more than comfort. And while you and I are more interested in being comfortable God is more interested in our being Christ-like and therefore He will allow the Chaldeans to press in upon us - why? To push us to the wall of ~~R~~ faith, so that He can come and say now the just will live by faith. Friend, if you're going to survive you're going to have to do it by trusting me. You see, sometimes you and I won't trust God until we have to. And the only way the Lord can press us to Himself and push us against the wall of faith is by allowing the enemy to come in. He's more interested, friends, in

Christ-likeness than in convenience. He's more interested in holiness than in happiness. We have a different set of values. I think about Paul's experience recorded in II Cor. chapter 12, he had two experiences in that chapter - have you noticed them? One is this, he's caught up into the third heaven and he is shown sights that stagger the mind and bewilder the imagination. He said, I saw things there and heard things that I can't even utter they are so magnificent. Then he had a thorn experience. Now that is to me interesting. In the same chapter you have a third heaven and a thorn. You know that's the way it is in the believer's life. You go from the third heaven to the thorn. Now you see most of us would place the greater value on the third heaven experience. If I had two lines and I said, all right everybody who wants a third heaven experience come over here and everybody who wants a thorn experience line up over here. Well I can't tell you which would be the greater line. Most of us think the greatest thing that could ever happen to us is to have a third heaven experience - it was the worst thing that ever happened to Paul. The reason Paul had the thorn was because of the third heaven. He saw so much and was blessed so much that he was in danger of being lifted up and being thought of more highly than he ought to and the Lord had to humble him by giving him a thorn. Now the interesting thing is this - Paul's greatest benefit came not from the third heaven but from the thorn. And Paul reacted like most of us react, he prayed that God would remove the thorn. Now listen to me - in God's standard of values He considers, He considers additional grace greater than the removal of the thorn. He said, "Paul, I won't remove the thorn but I'll give you something better." You know I have discovered that the reward of God --- you know what I might consider to be a reward of God, what a spiritual man might consider to be a reward of God, a carnal Christian might not consider to be a reward. It sort of gives me an indication of where I am spiritually, of what I think of the thorn. If I despise the thorn, and grow resentful towards the thorn, it gives me an indication

that there's something wrong w/ my spiritual makeup. Paul said, "therefore will I rather glory in my tribulations. Folks, he wanted to glory in the removal of the thorn. God said, No I want you to glory in the additional grace that I'm going to give you. Folks, God is working on a different value level. You say, isn't the Lord interested in my circumstances? Oh --- not nearly as much as you are. I think I could honestly say thi - he is interested in them only so far as they work to produce in you a godly character. And I think you cry in vain for God to change your circumstances until you have allowed those circumstances to change your character. And then when those circumstances have changed your character, He may change your circumstances, but if He doesn't it'll be all right because your character will have been so changed, the circumstances no longer bother you. We fret because we are ignorant of the way God works. Fret not thyself. Now I may be speaking to someone today who realizes that there are inequities in life, and you've just not been able to handle the fact that life's treated you so unfairly. I think one of these days, friend, God will show you that it really wasn't unfair. And you may say, well God's just totally indifferent, He's not done anything in my life -- oh yes He is. You say, well I don't understand how God works -- well there's the problem. But He is working. I don't understand what God's doing -- I know you dont. I don't always understand either. But I love the words of Chas. Haddon Spurgeon, he says, "When I cannot trace His hand I can trust His heart." And I don't know that we need to understand Him if we trust Him. I think when you and I demand an explanation of what God is doing - it reveals a lack of trust. You know we feel like the situation would be better in hand if we understand it. I doubt that very seriously. And I have an idea the reason the Lord withholds explanations is because it would just confuse us all the more. It's not that there's not an answer, its just that there's not an answer you and I could understand. That we could take in.