

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



March 20, 2016

Do Not Fret

It's hard to be optimistic when it seems the wicked have the upper hand. But optimism is not only possible, God demands it. One psalm tells us how.

“Do not fret because of evildoers . . . Trust in the Lord and do good. . . . Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret—it only causes harm” (Psa. 37:1, 3, 7, 8).



Psalm 37 is my go-to chapter when I feel anxious thoughts creeping into my mind. In an age when it seems that evil is corrupting every corner of society and good people are targeted for persecution, the message of this Psalm is more powerful than ever. We all need to dig deeper into this Psalm and learn its lesson of encouragement.

The psalm does not minimize the gravity of what confronts us. David freely acknowledges the success of the wicked in pushing their evil agenda. They scheme (v. 7), plot (v. 12), defraud (v. 21), and attack incessantly (v. 14, 32). They achieve positions of extraordinary power that enable them to impose their evil agenda upon others (v. 35).

It's hard to be optimistic when facing such an implacable foe.

But optimism is not only possible, God insists upon it. This psalm offers a simple three-pronged approach for maintaining a positive attitude in a negative world.

First, there is something we must learn to avoid: “do not fret” (v. 1, 7, 8). Other versions read, “don't be upset,” or “do not be agitated,” or simply “don't worry.” In other words, we need to calm down and get a grip. The natural inclination when we are mistreated is to strike back, to somehow put the wicked in his place. But that never works. In fact, “it only causes harm” (v. 8). What have we accomplished if we allow a wicked person to drag us down to his level?

Instead, we must train ourselves to “trust the Lord” (v. 3, 5, 40). When surrounded by evil, it's easy to get discouraged and assume that all is lost. But if our mind is focused on God, we realize that what we are witnessing is only a temporary blip in a much larger pattern of history. David assures us that the wicked “shall soon be cut down like the

grass” (v. 2). “In a little while” the wicked will be no more (v. 10, 20, 28, 34, 36, 38). However ominous his threats, it is only bluster and bluff. “The Lord laughs at him, for He sees that his day is coming” (v. 13). If God is laughing at the pompous posturing of the wicked, can't we at least smile? We must look at the larger canvas and realize that God is still in control, and the wicked will someday get his due.

Finally, we must “wait on the Lord” (v. 7, 9, 34). This is not a passive sitting on our hands expecting God to do something; rather, it is an active lifestyle of godliness. That means we “do good” (v. 3, 27), “show mercy and give” (v. 21, 26), and “speak wisdom and . . . justice” (v. 30). Our lives must be a reflection of the One whose glory we honor, even when it appears that nothing comes of it.

And what will be the outcome of such a strategy? “The future of that man is peace” (v. 37). Someday we'll be able to look back on the hard times and realize that God knew what He was doing all along. But that insight only comes to those who calmly trust and wait.

– David King