

### **354 Fret not thyself**

We will all be aware that the Psalms have a special place within God's Word, for within them and across them we find for our blessing a whole range of situations and emotions that were common to the human writers of the Psalms, notably David, and are equally common for us today.

The world is now very turbulent, Britain is caught up in the "Brexit crisis", and in different places and in different ways wickedness seems to be doing "very nicely thank you". The Lord's words come to mind regarding the latter times – "and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring (a common scriptural picture of strife among the nations); men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (from Luke 21.25-26, KJV). So we can gratefully turn now to Psalm 37, one of the psalms of special relevance for us in these challenging days.

Through David the Holy Spirit speaks to us of several themes through this psalm. For a start we hear much of the problems that will beset the wicked, despite their apparent successes for the time being (eg., vv 1-2, 9a, 10, 12-15, 17a, 20-21a, 22b, 32, 34b-36, 38). This reminder that wickedness shall not triumph, and that the wicked shall be justly judged by the Lord in His own good time, is an assurance in itself as we hear cases of flagrant wickedness in the news bulletins day by day; truly with regard to the wicked, "his day is coming" (v.13b).

But then, as a counter-balance to wickedness and the wicked, we are given wonderful assurances through this psalm concerning the character and ways of the Lord Himself, and the present and future blessings of those who are counted as righteous in His sight. Most of these blessings for the righteous flow from a straightforward obedience to various instructions given via David to the Lord's own people.

Here is a list of these direct instructions through the psalm, including the three-fold "Fret not ...", each one being extracted from the fuller text so as to form a specific list of how we are to cope in practical ways with the circumstances we find ourselves in today:

"Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity (v.1) ... Trust in the Lord and do good (v.3) ... Delight thyself in the Lord (v.4a) ... Commit thy way to the Lord; trust also in him (v.5a) ... Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not

thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass (v.7) ... Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil (v.8) ... Depart from evil, and do good (v.27a) ... Wait on the Lord, and keep his way (v.34a) ... Mark the perfect [man], and behold the upright” (v.37a).

Each of these instructions is followed by a reason for it, or by a promise of blessing arising from it.

Regarding the Lord Himself: He grants the desires of our hearts; He will bring His will, His righteousness and His judgment to pass; He upholds the righteous and knows the days of the upright (vv.17b-18a); He orders the steps of a [good] man, delights in his way and upholds [him with] His hand (from vv.23-24); he delights in judgment, forsakes not his saints and preserves them for ever (v.28a); and He shall help His people, deliver them from the wicked and save them – because they trust in Him (v.40).

Regarding the Lord’s people: they shall inherit the earth and delight themselves in the abundance of peace (vv.9b, 11, 22a, 34a); their “littleness” is better than the riches of the wicked (v.16); their inheritance shall be for ever, they shall not be ashamed in the evil time and will be satisfied in the days of famine (vv.18b-19); they show mercy, and give, and lend, and their seed is blessed and they are preserved for ever (from vv.26 & 28); and the righteous one speaks wisdom and of judgment, with the law of God in his heart (vv.30-31).

What a God in whose hands we find ourselves! What is more, today we have the fuller blessing than did David in his day, of membership of the New Covenant of grace, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God Himself.

By God’s bountiful mercies in Christ, we are known, loved, upheld, preserved, saved, washed, and crowned. Truly – “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1.5b-6).

No wonder that the simple word from the Lord to each of His people has been, is, and shall be - “Fret not thyself”.

