

**Do Not Fret [Psalm 37]**  
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## INTRODUCTION

1. What are you afraid of? It's a humbling question, isn't it?
  - a. Obviously, we're rather reserved with our fears out of fear someone will take advantage
  - b. What's fascinating is that **fear is not something that we're born with**, but develop.
    - 1) Still, for many people, fear grips them and prohibits them from truly living.
2. Consider some quotes about fear:
  - a. Mary Tricky: Fear is faith that it won't work out.
  - b. Henry H. Tweedy: Fear is the father of courage and the mother of safety.
  - c. Dudley Nichols: Fear is the highest fence.
  - d. Christopher Coan: Fear cannot take what you do not give it.
  - e. F.D. Roosevelt: The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.
3. This week's psalm has a simple message for you and I: **Do Not Fret**

## VERSES 1,2

<sup>1</sup> Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong; <sup>2</sup> for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.

1. Where did the fear originate from the psalmists' audience?
  - a. Communities were tightly knit, so there wasn't necessarily a fear of the creepy neighbor
  - b. The familial structure of the age ensured relative safety among townspeople
2. Instead, the Israel in fear of the many enemies that would come their way.
  - a. Here is an image of the valley of Jezreel and, at the bottom right, is the city of Megiddo
  - b. This is the region for which the apocalyptic event Armageddon is named [HAR Megiddo]
  - c. The book of Revelation isn't concerned as much with this location as to what it meant.
    - 1) For thousands of years, the Megiddo Pass was the locations of battles
    - 2) From Pharaoh's in the 15<sup>th</sup> century to key battles of World War One
  - d. Why did this happen, it was the geography/topography of the land.
  - e. The area sat in the midst of trade routes everyone wanted to control
3. So if you lived during the time this psalm was written, the evil you would've feared was this
  - a. You never would've known when an army would come over the horizon for battle.
  - b. It's this unknowing that would've have gripped someone with fear.
    - 1) Perhaps you could deal with an individual, but an army? Not likely.
    - 2) The only thing you could have done is to flee.
4. So why do I note this? So we maintain a proper perspective
  - a. Many Christians are obsessed with the other "evil" people.
  - b. We enjoy putting faces on them, making them the object of our ire.
  - c. Thus, when we read a psalm like this, it reinforces this improper view of the world.
  - d. Here, the object of fear is nameless.
5. The key to this psalm is: don't fear, every dog has its day—then it's put to sleep.

## VERSES 3-7

<sup>3</sup> Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. <sup>4</sup> Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. <sup>5</sup> Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: <sup>6</sup> He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn your vindication like the noonday sun. <sup>7</sup> 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.

1. Examine the words of these verses as a response to combat our fear:
  - a. TRUST, DWELL, ENJOY SAFETY, COMMIT, TRUST, RIGHTEOUS REWARD, VINDICATION

- b. This psalm is filled with encouragement for us to release our fears to God.
- 2. What the psalmist tells us is rather simple & you know it: the closer to God, further from fear
  - a. Just to clarify: this is not a salvific issue. Don't confuse the two here.
  - b. It's not that, if you still have fear, then you're not within the grace of God.
  - c. Still, as his followers, we're expected to give the Lord our full-trust.
- 3. It was almost eight years ago when we decided to leave suburbia and move to the city
  - a. While we had many friends encourage us on our journey, we received some negativity
  - b. I had many people question our sanity, why I'd subject my pregnant wife to this
  - c. And if I'm being perfectly honest: there have been times when I lacked confidence.
    - 1) I'm still "street aware." I don't live in relative safety as I did in the suburbs.
    - 2) However [and I want you to know this as it's important for our church] I TRUST MORE.
  - d. And, as a result, my faith is stronger.
- 4. Even if things don't go perfectly, we are called to trust.

### **VERSES 8-11**

<sup>8</sup> Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil. <sup>9</sup> For those who are evil will be destroyed, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land. <sup>10</sup> A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. <sup>11</sup> But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity.

- 1. There is a second means by which we can handle fear: attempt to solve it ourselves.
  - a. When exposed to violence & evil (or the possibility of such) our impulse is to avenge
  - b. But we are again told not to fear, not to seek wrath, for evil will breed within us.
  - c. NOTE VERSE 9: those who hope is in the Lord will inherit the Land.
- 2. Again, this is where Christianity can sometimes create friction with our nationality.
  - a. I want to use a relevant public argument with which to frame this concept.
  - b. That is the current national debate on gun control.
    - 1) FIRST THIS: our church has no official position on this and I'm not staking my position
    - 2) But what I want to do is address is the philosophy behind the arguments.
  - c. On either spectrum of the debate is the issue of SAFETY. This is why the passions flow
    - 1) Gun control activists argue that if there were limitations, everyone would be safer
    - 2) Conversely, gun activists believe that if these rights are limited, they will not be safe
  - d. I doubt we'll every see agreement on this contentious issue, but there's a lesson for us
- 3. Ultimately, your trust for safety ought not be in systems or perspectives or government
  - a. Leave it in the hands of the Lord.
 

**Romans 12:19** *"Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord."*

*\*I invite you to read through the rest of the psalm, which follows this theme.*

### **VERSES 37-40**

<sup>37</sup> Consider the blameless, observe the upright; a future awaits those who seek peace. <sup>38</sup> But all sinners will be destroyed; there will be no future for the wicked. <sup>39</sup> The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble. <sup>40</sup> The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.

- 1. Jesus said this succinctly in Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
  - a. We're called to observe those champions of trust who lived fearlessly
  - b. During Black history month, we again remember MLK as summarized in U2's *In the Name*
  - c. "Free at last, they took your life. They could not take your pride."

## CONCLUSION

1. So the message of the psalmist is simple: Don't fret
  - a. That might have many possible incarnations in your life.
    - 1) Don't fear creating
    - 2) Don't fear living your life
    - 3) Don't fear letting go
    - 4) Don't fear trying something new
    - 5) Don't fear giving your life in the hands of Jesus Christ
    - 6) DO NOT FRET
2. Let me ask you: do you have work-arounds in your life?
  - a. I do. When something doesn't work how I want, I figure out how to fix it.
  - b. Many times, we don't think that God's system works so we enact work-arounds.
  - c. IF YOU PLACE YOUR TRUST IN WORK-AROUNDS, YOU'RE STILL LIVING IN FEAR

### 3. **Isaiah 41:10**

*"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."*