

Do you get upset when nice things happen to nasty people?

Some people get really bent out of shape over this, because they do the right thing, and they get nothing but trouble.

It’s not unreasonable to resent people who do wrong and get away with it, and even flourish in their wickedness. It can get under your skin and torment you. Then burning envy and seething resentment will expel all peace and joy from your life.

There’s a story about a man harbored intense resentment against another man. One night an angel appeared to him, “*You may have anything your heart desires. Just ask and it’s all yours. But know this, anything you ask for, this man you resent will receive twice as much. If you ask for fabulous wealth, you’ll get it, but he will be twice as wealthy. If you ask for long life and health, he will live longer and be healthier.*” The man thought for a moment. Then he said the angel, “*Here’s what I want. I want you to strike me blind in one eye.*”

The psalmist Asaph wrestled with debilitating torment. He wrote:

. . . I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; . . . They are free from the burdens common to man; . . . Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. (Psalm 73:3-5, 13)

It got under his skin.

That line was popularized by Cole Porter’s song that expresses the inner wrestling of someone trying to justify an affair.

*I’ve got you under my skin.
I’ve got you deep in the heart of me
So deep in my heart that you’re really a part of me.
I’ve got you under my skin.
I’d tried so not to give in.
I said to myself: this affair never will go so well
But why should I try to resist when, baby, I know so well
I’ve got you under my skin.*

If anything gets under your skin emotionally, romantically, or literally, it has invaded your life and it can do a lot of damage.

There is a disease that gives the disturbing sensation of something crawling under the skin. It’s called Morgellons Disease. The symptoms include crawling, biting, and stinging sensations; finding fibers on or under the skin. Those who suffer from it say “It never goes away. It doesn’t die, it doesn’t leave.”

- Letting people get under your skin and mess with your life can be an ordeal that won’t let go of you.

Fuming and fretting over the wrongs you feel others have done can torment you. It doesn’t go away; it doesn’t just die; it doesn’t let you rest.

- In the 37th Psalm David tells you how to stop the wrongdoing of others from getting under your skin.

¹ *Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong;*

² *for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.*

³ *Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.*

⁴ *Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.*

⁵ *Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:*

⁶ *He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.*

⁷ *Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.*

⁸ *Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret-- it leads only to evil.*

This Psalm has helped lots of people. Maybe you could use some help today.

Perhaps you have allowed some disagreeable person squatting rights at the control center of your life.

If you let the actions of other people control what happens inside you, you will shrivel as a human being.

- Some people get their feathers ruffled very easily. You have to tip-toe around them. Then there are others who can take a lot of abuse before they get annoyed.

But some things can upset even the most stoic among us.

How would you feel if a drunk driver stole the life of your teenage son in a traffic wreck, and then the judge let him off with just a minor sentence because it was only a first offense?

How would you feel if some jerk slipped your precious daughter the date rape drug and then abused her?

You and I know of people who are fretting because of injustices like that. You may even have heard them utter those horrible words, “I hope he rots in hell!”

Do you think it would do any good to say someone who is struggling like that, “Now, now. The Bible says don’t fret because of evil men”?

- At the other end of the spectrum we have people who get all bent out of shape because someone didn’t say hi to them or smile at them. Then they begin to plan some delicious ways to give the cold shoulder to someone who did nothing wrong!

No wonder Archie Bunker said, *‘I got nothing against mankind. It’s people I can’t stand.’*

- The verb *fret* occurs three times in the text I read (vv.1,7,8). It means to burn with anger, to be incensed. It means to get your knickers in a knot over something.

If you fret, it will incinerate all the peace and joy you may have had in your soul.

- David tells you not to wallow in the muck of resentment, grumbling to yourself, “A lot of good it does me to live an honest life and always do the right thing. Look at where it got me. It doesn’t seem to pay to do what it is right.”

Don’t go there! Why? Because you don’t want to be like them or to do what they did to get what they have.

²*for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.*

All that stuff they got by their wrongdoing—they can’t take it with them. They go, stuff stays.

A Spanish proverb makes the observation, *‘There are no pockets in a shroud (burial cloth).’*

In Psalm 37:1-8 the Psalmist David tells you how to avoid the paralyzing effects of envy and bitterness in your life

I. TRUST IN THE LORD. Psalm 37:3

Fretting strangles your spirit. You can’t get rid of it on your own.

It’s too strong for you. It takes control of you.

If you’re truthful, you will admit you can get a twisted pleasure out of fretting.

You can taste what you want to happen to that scuzzball—and it’s so delectable!

But it’s devouring you from the inside, and you don’t even know it.

- You can’t trust yourself to do the right thing. You’re too upset.

³*Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.*

Only if you trust in the Lord is it possible for you to do the right thing—to do good. Only then will your life be what it should be.

- Three thousand years ago David said trusting in the Lord would let you live peacefully and be fulfilled as a person.

But if you let someone get under your skin and you are obsessed with a deep resentment, you won’t have a full life. It withers and shrivels.

You become miserable. At the mere mention of that person’s name a dark cloud overwhelms you.

You may pretend that everything is okay, but others can tell it isn’t. They see how the light and sunshine have disappeared from your life.

- You don’t want to be anywhere the person who has hurt you. If you have to be in the same office or at the same party or in the same church as that person, you watch every move of the person you’ve allowed to control so much of your life.

You can’t even enjoy place where you feel you belong.

It’s so tragic if this happens to someone in the church—someone who is a follower of Jesus Christ. But it does happen.

- That’s what happens if you trust in yourself, and think you can manage your life on your own.

Maybe you used to trust in the Lord and cling to him. But now you give in to yourself, and you’re not doing good.

- God wants you to feel safe and to flourish in the place where he has put you.

You won’t find that safety by depending on yourself or on others. So trust in the Lord, and don’t let others get under your skin.

II. DELIGHT IN THE LORD. Psalm 37:4

Evil men who do wrong (1) are proud of their possessions, their popularity, their power, their sexual exploits and their luxuries.

They delight themselves in what they have accomplished and the things they have.

- What do you have? You have the Lord. You should delight yourself most of all in the Lord. You may be thinking, “Oh, stop with the pious religious claptrap. Get real!”

If you are a true Christian, this is real and you know it.

⁴ *Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.*

If you grasp what it means to have the Lord—that he is yours—then fretting over someone who may, or may not have done you wrong starts to lose its power over you.

This is not automatic or easy just because you are a Christian. But it does work.

If your greatest delight in life is wrapped up in your prestige or your popularity or your possessions, then others who interfere with your hopes or plans make you madder than a old bear with a boil on its buttocks..

But if your most deeply held values revolve around your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, the selfish actions of others may disappoint but not overwhelm you.

- And if you delight in the Lord, you will want whatever pleases him and you will be eager to do his will. So God will give you the desires of your heart.

The desires of your heart are your deepest, inmost desires. If you delight yourself in the Lord, your desires will be good.

If it's God's goodness to you that thrills your soul, you won't let any ornery schmucks get under your skin.

III. YIELD TO THE LORD. Psalm 37:5-6

Invite God to take charge of your life.

⁵ *Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:*

The Hebrew word for 'commit' here is *gol*. It means “to roll” So the text says, literally, ‘*Roll your way on the Lord and trust in him and he will work.*’

Roll all that stuff that is in your way onto your Lord.

- There's a place in the Old Testament that had special significance for the Israelites. It was called Gilgal. It's a cognate of the verb *gol*.

‘Then the Lord said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” So the place has been called Gilgal to this day.’ (Joshua 5:9)

After Israel's defilement from 430 years in Egypt, at Gilgal God rolled away the reproach from his people. God removed all the pagan vileness that would separate his people from him.

So David said *commit your way to the Lord*—roll the stuff you're fretting about onto him. Release it to him.

The Lord is the only one who can take care of it, so that nothing will get between your soul and him.

He invites you to do this. Jesus our Lord said ‘*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*’ (Matthew 11:28-30)

So throw yourself completely on him. Don't hold anything back.

⁶ *He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.*

This applies to your reputation. Do you fret because someone has slandered you? People may be hearing and believing things about you that are not true.

David tells you to roll that burden over on the Lord, put your reputation in God's hands.

‘Reputation is who people think you are. Character is who you actually are. Take care of your character and God will take care of your reputation’ (Anon.)

It's what God sees and knows that really matters, not what other people think.

If you commit your way to the Lord, people will see who you really are.

But there are some who have decided to believe the worst about you, and nothing will change their minds.

- If you roll yourself on the Lord you won't let anybody get under your skin.

IV. WAIT FOR THE LORD. Psalm 37:7

⁷ *Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.*

This means to submit silently and wait longingly.

Some of us devote so much of our attention to speaking and preparing to speak that we may neglect this important part of a godly life.

Wait silently in God's presence as you read his word prayerfully.

C.H. Spurgeon said, '*A silent tongue in many cases not only shows a wise head, but a holy heart.*' (C.H. Spurgeon)

In a depraved society evil men often succeed and godly people often fail. Those who do wrong get the prize and you're supposed to congratulate them! But you want someone to do something now to fix things and teach dishonest, evil men a lesson they'll never forget.

You want to see something happen so that they don't get away without being punished.

- Wait for the Lord. If you think this means waiting for the Lord to show you how he deals with wrongdoers, you may not live long enough to see it.

God doesn't settle all his accounts every month.

Jesus told his disciples a parable about weeds growing among the good wheat. The farmer's servants asked if they should go and pull out the weeds. He told them to wait until the harvest when the weeds will be separated from the wheat and burned (Matthew 13:24-30)

God will deal with evil people and wrongdoers in his way and according to his time schedule.

- We wait longingly, not for what God will do to them, but for what he will do in our lives.

If we do that, others won't get under our skin.

If someone has something against you, or if you have something against someone, then go to that person in private and make it right. Jesus told us to do this (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-17)

Maybe you did that, but that person still gets under your skin. Maybe that person didn't respond very well and things are basically still the same.

Perhaps nothing has changed in your own heart. You went through all the motions of doing something Jesus said to do, but your heart wasn't in it.

It won't work unless you do what David says here in Psalm 37—Trust in the Lord; Delight in the Lord, Yield to the Lord, and Wait for the Lord.

- Have you been pretending that everything is fine between you and someone else who has gotten under your skin? You've been trusting in yourself to take care of the situation, and it's too much for you. Are you ready to stop pretending and be honest with the Lord?
- Has someone gotten under your skin because he/she has what you'd like to have—maybe the promotion you think you should have had? If that's what means the most to you, you will be miserable. Are you ready to ask the Lord to help you find your delight in him? He can give you the ability to reorder your priorities. Then he will grant your re-ordered desires, and you will know what it's like to live a fulfilled life.
- Are you trying to live life the way you want it, but too many things have gone wrong and you feel defiled and abused by all you've been through? God wants you to roll it all onto him. Invite God into your life to take charge. Isn't it about time you did that? You don't have to keep on living a withered life.
- Are you willing to let God deal with evil people and those who do wrong? (v.1) He'll take care of it his way in his time. Your part is to submit patiently to what God wants to do in your life.

⁸ *Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret-- it leads only to evil.*