

LIVING FOURSQUARE

"Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Psalms 37:3.

David was troubled when he observed the prosperity of some of the wicked and the afflictions of those who were righteous. He wondered why God dealt thus with the sinners and the saints. This problem not only caused David to wonder, but it has troubled many of God's people through the intervening years. Doubtless most of us have wondered why it is that the wicked seemingly prosper while the righteous frequently suffer. As the old song expressed it:

"Tempted and tried we're oft made to wonder
Why it should be thus all the day long,
While there are others living about us,
Never molested tho in the wrong.

When death has come and taken our loved ones,
It leaves our home so lonely and drear;
Then do we wonder why others prosper,
Living so wicked year after year.

Farther along we'll know all about it,
Farther along we'll understand why;
Cheer up, my brother, live in the sunshine,
We'll understand it all by and by."

By inspiration David answered this question about the prosperity of the wicked by reminding us that it is only for a season. He wrote, "For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." Both from the Scriptures and from observation we have learned that the prosperity of the wicked is always brief, or only for a season.

God says, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity." Various things cause people to fret. Some work hard, get tired, let the nerves get frayed, and become irritable and fretful. Others fret because life deals harshly with them. Having suffered a loss of some kind, they conclude that no one ever suffered as they have. Still others are hurt because of what life withholds. Some seemingly suffer because of the successes of their acquaintances. Nothing is more foolish or useless than fretting and whining, and yet some people indulge in them excessively. In describing one of his friends, who was always complaining, one of the Puritans said that he was "sick of the frets." Knowing that this ailment was inward, he regretted to see him indulge in that which affected both his soul and his body. If you want to know the best method for losing friends and for influencing people in the wrong direction, just cultivate the habit of fretting, worrying, and complaining.

Some people are never free from fretting and murmuring. They are never thrilled, never uplifted, never inspired, never pleased, never satisfied, never gratified, and never grateful.

Fretting springs from one's determination to have his own way. If a fretful person does not get his own way, he usually shows chilling selfishness or childish peevishness, and makes life miserable for others by his burning bitterness. Fretting eats its nasty way into the vitals of the soul. It gnaws a person with the pain of overpowering perplexity. It corrodes the delicate machinery of life. It undermines the manhood or the womanhood which was divinely intended for the magnifying of the Master. It disturbs with doubts, deceives with delusions, depresses with despair, defames with denunciations, and demoralizes with discouragements.

"Fret not thyself" means that one must not get unduly heated about things. It means to keep cool. Fretfulness is heat in the wrong place. Concerning his feeling about some particular topic, it is quite frequently remarked about a man that "he got quite hot over it." But that kind of heat does not increase the man's driving power or effectiveness. Rather, it is indicative of the absence of the anointing oil of the grace of God. Do not let your bearings get hot. Let the oil of the Lord keep them cool, lest you become an evildoer.

A whole philosophy of life was summarized by the psalmist in a single sentence recorded in our text. Therein he emphasized what is really vital. He said: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. He named four of the main interests and necessary elements in a foursquare life.

I. Religious Faith.

"Trust in the Lord." This is the right place to begin. No one can start to live right until he has learned to trust in the Lord. This trust in Him is basic to all that is best. If this side of a man's life is ignored or neglected, he is sadly incomplete. Religious faith is an essential element in any foursquare life. It furnishes the very best preparation for the present life, and the only adequate preparation for the world to come.

Since the Lord is so trustworthy, it ought to be easy to trust in Him. Trusting in the Lord with all your heart not only brings one the forgiveness of his sins and peace of mind, but it is an amazing cure for fretfulness and excessive care.

To many, who do not know the Lord, the admonition to place one's trust in Him does not seem to be any solution at all to life's problems. Some have even spoken of religious aspirations as ideas invented by men in an effort to escape the facts of life. Sometimes they even go so far as to describe prayer and spiritual meditation as nothing more than "defense mechanisms." But the child of God knows better than that. He knows that "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

Why not trust in the Lord, since He has never failed a single human being? We can trust His love. His matchless love is a guarantee that He will do what is best for us.

"How the tho't enthralls me
That whate'er befalls me,
One will always love me the same;
Not a trial ever causes Him to sever
From the ones who honor His name.

He will keep His promise to me,
All the way with me He will go;
He has never broken any promise spoken;
He will keep His promise, I know."

We are never sure as to what is best for us, but since He is infinitely wise, we can certainly trust His wisdom. Moreover, we can trust His power. Inasmuch as our wisdom is entirely inadequate to cope with many of the problems that we encounter, it is so encouraging to know that the solution to them is to be found through placing our trust in the Lord's wisdom and power. Our problems are never too small for the Lord to be bothered with, nor too large for Him to solve. When we take them to Him in prayer, we must leave them with Him and not pick them up and carry them away with us. His power to bless is not more than His willingness to do so.

"Rest in the Lord, my soul;
Commit to Him thy way.
What to thy sight seems dark as night
To Him is bright as day.

Rest in the Lord, my soul;
He planned for thee thy life.
Brings fruit from rain, brings good from pain
And peace and joy from strife.

Rest in the Lord, my soul;
This fretting weakens thee,
Why not be still, accept His will?
Thou shalt His glory see."

Have faith in God and in His care for you. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Thus runs the promise, and so runs experience too. Strength according to the days; strength as the days; and strength to the end of the days.

II. Humane Service.

"Do good." Trust in the Lord adds motive and stimulus for right living. Religious faith finds its natural expression in doing good. Any faith which is not expressed in kind speech, fair dealing, and unselfish service certainly does not have any value. God is not pleased with anything less than righteousness. Doing good is an essential element in the four-square life.

It is truly amazing that the entire biography of the greatest life this world has ever seen is contained in a single and brief sentence, "He went about doing good." What a simple and undramatic thing to do, just what any child of God might have done, but what nobody else has ever done all the time. Wherever Christ went on earth, He just "went about doing good," and in doing so left us an example that we should follow. Looking back over the wonderful and never-to-be-forgotten years that he and his associates had companied with the Lord, Peter rejoiced in the unfading consciousness that he had been with One Who had lived only to do good. He did good at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. Christ spent His life in doing good within the sphere in which He lived, and to those within His reach. We should also do all the good we can in all the ways we can as long as we can possibly do so. We must think of other people. We begin to be like Christ when we have an intense desire to be helpful. There are those who will say that we are foolish to give ourselves in service for others who do not appreciate what we do for them. They said as much about Christ when they tried to keep Him from going to the cross, but we know that He did not make a mistake in choosing the way of sacrifice. To do good should be the object of every Christian. From this service there is not to be any retirement.

"Do good." If your heart is fully trusting in the Lord, sin will lose its charm, and evil ways will no longer seem nice to you. You will want to act on the square, hold yourself upright, walk straight, and help others. Doing good covers everything from the smallest act all of the way to the largest one of helping somebody to know, to love, and to obey the Saviour.

III. Political Stability.

"So shalt thou dwell in the land." Those who first heard this glorious promise of political stability were accustomed to see whole civilizations carried off to Assyria, or to Babylon, or to Rome, according to the wills of their conquerors. It is good for us to know that a godly life is watched over carefully by the beneficent providence of God. It is wonderful that we have the Lord to Whom we can look for the finer, the deeper, and the more abiding joys of life.

IV. Economic Security.

"Verily thou shalt be fed." Man does not live by bread alone. Neither does he live without bread. Bread comes by hard work. And work is not a curse, but a blessing. God is so gracious and good to permit us to work and to earn a livelihood.

The promise which is attached to the condition stated in the text insures the supply of our most fundamental needs, which are home, food, and clothing, or economic security. God guarantees the future of His children. The Bible says, "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good" (Psalms 34:10). After he had come in contact with great multitudes of people, David made the observation, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalms 37:25). And very few people, if any, have ever seen it. Regardless of what life may bring to you, if your trust is in the Lord, if you are engaged in doing good, and if you are dwelling within the circle of God's will, the Lord will give you strength which will be sufficient for your every need.

"He cannot fail for He is God,
He cannot fail, He'll keep His word,
He cannot fail, He'll see you through,
He cannot fail, He'll answer you."