**THE SILVER LINING - MESSAGES OF HOPE AND CHEER BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**04. THE CURE FOR CARE by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"Fret not thyself."*

*Psalm 37:1*

"Fret not thyself." Do not get into a perilous heat about things. And yet, if ever heat were justified, it was surely justified in the circumstances outlined in the psalm. Evildoers were moving about clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day. "Workers of iniquity" were climbing into the supreme places of power, and were tyrannising over their less fortunate brethren. Sinful men and women were stalking through the land in the pride of life, and basking in the light and comfort of great prosperity. And good men were becoming heated and fretful. "Fret not thyself." Do not get unduly heated! Keep cool! Even in a good cause fretfulness is not a wise helpmeet. Fretting only heats the bearings, it does not generate the steam. It is no help to a train for the axles to get hot; their heat is only a hindrance; the best contribution which the axles can make to the progress of the train is to keep cool. Fretfulness is just the heating of the axles; it is heat in the wrong place; it is heat become a source of weakness rather than strength. We sometimes say of a man, concerning his relationship to some particular topic, "He got quite hot over it!" That kind of heat does not increase a man's driving power, nor does it contribute to his vindication. It is only the perilous heat of the axles.

Now, when the axles get heated it is because of unnecessary friction; dry surfaces are grinding together which ought to be kept in smooth cooperation by a delicate cushion of oil. And is it not a suggestive fact that this word "fret" is closely akin to the word "friction," and is indicative of the absence of the anointing oil of the grace of God? In fretfulness, thought is grinding against thought, desire against desire, will against will; a little bit of grit gets into the bearings--some slight disappointment, some ingratitude, some discourtesy, and the smooth working of the life is checked. Friction begets heat, and with the heat most dangerous conditions are created.

We can never really foresee to what kind of disaster this perilous heat may lead. The psalmist, in the early verses of this psalm, points out some of the stages of increasing destructiveness to which this unclean fire assuredly leads. It is somewhat strange, and yet not strange, that the second piece of counsel in this psalm is concerned with the disposition of envy. It is not put there as an irrelevance. It indicates a possible succession. Fretfulness frequently leads to jealousy. For what is jealousy? Again, let it be said that jealousy is heat out of place. The "jealous" man and the "zealous" man are somewhat akin, but in one case the fire is clean and in the other it is unclean. It is the difference between fervour and fever. Fretfulness creates the unclean fire of envy. Now see the further stage proclaimed by the Psalmist. "Cease from anger." The fire is now burning furiously, noisy in the fierceness of its wrath. What shall we expect as the climax of all this? "Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil." That is what I should expect. Men who have worked themselves into envy and anger will be led into the very evil they originally resented. Men begin by fretting "because of evildoers," and they end by "doing the evil" themselves. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" "Fret not thyself!" Do not let thy bearings get hot. Let the oil of the Lord keep thee cool, lest by reason of an unclean heat thou be reckoned among the evildoers.

How, then, is fretfulness to be cured?--The Psalmist brings in the heavenly to correct the earthly. This psalm is full of "the Lord"! "The Lord" is the refrain of almost every verse, as though it were only in the power of the heavenly that this dangerous fire could be subdued. Let us look at the counsel in detail.

"Trust in the Lord." "Trust." It is, perhaps, helpful to remember that the word which is here translated "trust" is elsewhere in the Old Testament translated "careless." "Be careless in the Lord!" Instead of carrying a load of care let care be absent! It is the carelessness of little children running about the house in the assurance of their father's providence and love. It is the singing disposition that leaves something for the parent to do. Assume that He is working as well as thyself, and working even when things appear to be adverse.

I remember meeting a man in Birmingham, not so very long ago, a man who is honestly and earnestly seeking to live a Christian life, but he mourned to me the depression under which he was suffering on that particular day. "I feel very depressed; my feelings are gloomy; I feel as though my Lord were far away!" It was a very miserable morning; the unclean snow was melting in the streets, and a November fog possessed the town. I said to him, "Do you think the Welsh water is running into our town today? Has the supply from the Welsh hills been stopped? The day is gloomy enough, the fog is about, and the atmosphere is certainly chilly, but the water from the Welsh hills is flowing into the city quite as abundantly as it will do on the sunniest day in June! The fog in Birmingham will not check the gracious supply from the hills!" And so it is with our feelings. The supply of grace is not determined by the changes in our moods; it is independent of our feelings. 'There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God!" That river is flowing even when we are temporarily depressed, and we are no longer enjoying the ecstasy of the heights. "Trust in the Lord!" Believe in His fidelity! Assume that the river is flowing even on the darkest day. This would be an amazing cure for fretfulness and excessive care.

"Delight thyself also in the Lord." How beautiful the phrase! The literal significance is this, "Seek for delicacies in the Lord." Yes, and if we only set about with ardent purpose to discover the delicacies of the Lord's table, we should have no time and no inclination to fret. But this is just what the majority of us do not do. We take the crumbs from the Master's table, and we have no taste of the excellent delicacies. Now the delicacies of anything are not found in the elementary stages; we have to move forward to the advanced. The delicacies of music are not found in the first half-dozen lessons; it is only in the later stages that we come to the exquisite. And so it is in art, and so it is in literature, and so it is with the "things of the Lord." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Let us be ambitious for the excellent! God has not yet given to us of His best. He always keeps the best wine until the last. We shall never reach God's superlative! The "unsearchable riches of Christ" will reveal themselves more and more to us throughout the glorious seasons of the eternal day. When we sit at the table of the Lord, tasting of His delicacies, fretfulness will be unable to breathe.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord." "Thy way!" What is that? Any pure purpose, any worthy ambition, any duty, anything we have got to do, any road we have got to tread, all our outgoings. "Commit thy way unto the Lord." Commit it to Him, not merely when we are in the middle of the way and are stuck and lost in the mire. Let us commit our beginnings unto Him, before we have gone wrong; let us have His companionship from the very outset of the journey. "I am Alpha." He likes to be in at our beginnings. What am I purposing for tomorrow? What am I setting out to do? Have I committed it to the Lord, or am I setting out upon a solitary journey? If I am going out alone, fretfulness will encounter me before I have gone many steps in the way; if I go out in the company of Jesus I shall have the peace that passeth understanding, and the heat of my life will be the ardour of an intense devotion.

"Rest is the Lord." Having done all this, and doing it all, trusting in the Lord, delighting in the Lord, committing my way unto the Lord, let me now just "rest." Don't worry. Whatever happens, just refer it to the Lord! If it be anything injurious He will suppress it. If it be anything containing helpful ministry He will adapt it to our need. This is the cure for care.