

### Living the Stress-Free Life

“To fret” means that you have a worry or feeling of unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome. In Hebrew the word we translate “fret” is *charah*, which means to glow or grow warm; figuratively (usually) to blaze up, to kindle, be displeased, and grieve. The statement that someone is “hot and bothered” really defines a fretting person. Four times in Scripture we find the phrase “fret not.” In the order of their occurrence, we find God is telling us not to worry about people who do wrong. *“Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity”* (Psalm 37:1). Then God reminds us not to be bothered when the blessing is on the wicked and not on us. *“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”* (Psalm 37:7). God commands us not to try to “even the score” in a fretting, vengeful spirit. *“Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil”* (Psalm 37:8). Biblical wisdom is refusing to be envious toward the life of the unregenerate. *“Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked”* (Proverbs 24:19). One thing for sure, God will even every score and we need to always remember that much of our reward, if not realized here, will be granted in Heaven. Jesus reminds us when this happens to *“Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets”* (Luke 6:23). You’re in good company and our Lord is keeping the record.

To live in a continued state of “fretting” would be living in stress. Stress is the continuation of pressure or the fretting state of mind. You might say fretting are the steps that lead us into a state of stress. Let’s examine three ways to live stress-free:

#### 1. You can triumph over the waves beneath you.

Psalm 121:3 says, *“He will not suffer thy foot to be moved....”* When I see this promise, I immediately go to the incident of Peter losing his footing on the waves of the Sea of Galilee. The Bible records, *“But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary”* (Matthew 14:24). After Jesus challenged Peter to walk with him out on those boisterous waves, we see this take place: *“But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him...”* (Matthew 14:30,31a). Without hesitation, our Lord picked up the sinking disciple out of the angry waves, steadied him and led him on to the boat.

When my wife and I were in Hawaii, I was fascinated and in awe of the Banzai Pipeline on the northern shore of O’ahu. Probably the highest and most ferocious swells in the world are found here. Yet in spite of the warnings of

imminent death awaiting prospective surfers, there are times this beach is crowded with surfers ready to catch the wave. In the world of sports there is not much greater thrill than surfing. You are not being pulled or yanked by any man-made device; you are riding the waves that our Creator has designed dramatically in His creation. If you are on top of the wave, you are having unceasing fun. If you are beneath the wave, you may be fighting for your life. The same stress generated in the wave can either give you a ride or scare of a lifetime...it all depends if you are on top or underneath. All of life is equipped with stress; our relationship with Jesus and obedience to Him determines if we are on top (emotionally) or beneath. I often claim this promise: *“And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them”* (Deuteronomy 28:13).

## **2. You will be shaded from the sun.**

Psalm 121:5,6a says, *“The LORD is thy keeper the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day....”* Under a hot sun, we can be burned and made very uncomfortable. In the course of a lifetime, even too much exposure to the sun can bring on cancer. In the Middle East, where the Bible was written, the effects of the sun can be brutalizing. The deserts of this area can soar upwards to 122 degrees. The intense heat can cause heat cramps, exhaustion and stroke, which could lead to unconsciousness or even death. So, in this area of the world in which the Bible was written, desert heat is nothing to joke about. God was telling us He will provide shade from all debilitating circumstances, even the effects of the hottest sun. There is no heat that He cannot cool and no thirst that He cannot quench. Walking in stress is like walking on a continuous desert, whereas walking with the Lord is a walk in a continual oasis.

## **3. You shall be protected from the moon.**

Psalm 121: 5a, 6b says, *“The LORD is thy keeper...nor the moon (smite thee) by night.”* Now you may wonder what danger awaits us in the moonlight? A man approached Jesus who had a son that was totally out of control. He said, *“Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water”* (Matthew 17:15). The word “lunatic” in Greek is: seleniazomai, which comes to us from a word that means to be moon-struck, i.e. crazy. In English the word is from late Latin *lunaticus*, from Latin *luna* ‘moon’ (from the belief that changes of the moon caused intermittent insanity). Philosophers such as Aristotle and Pliny the Elder argued that the full moon induced insane individuals with (what are now diagnosed) bipolar disorders by providing light during nights which would otherwise have been dark, and affecting susceptible individuals with sleep deprivation which would, in turn, trigger dysfunction. It seems man has been fascinated with moodiness and troubles that seem to be affected by the lunar calendar. I have pastored more than one medical professional who tell me the waiting rooms in emergency wards are full

when the moon is full. Now, do not be concerned; no one is going to start howling like a wolf just because of the changing of the moon! As a matter of fact, I believe a lot of behavior is induced because we believe that a certain change of season will automatically affect our nature and environment. Whether an illness is psychosomatic or real, Jesus is the answer! Although the disciples were impotent in helping the youngster, Jesus rebuked the demonic influence and the boy was healed from that very hour. What comfort all of us should enjoy, knowing that Jesus can eliminate not only the stress we experience from everyday temptations for anxiety, but for protection on every day in our lunar or calendar year.

-Pastor Pope-

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