

## ***“The Steps of a Good Man”***

***Psalm 37:23-24***

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Introduction: Last week we looked at the first 5 verses of this Psalm which I entitled “Fret or Focus.” It is another acrostic psalm, with roughly every other verse beginning with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. David addresses the problem of why the wicked seem to prosper while the righteous suffer. David references “*the wicked*” 14 times & gives the command to “*fret not*” 3 times. The only other time we find this command is in Proverbs 24:19, “*Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked.*” We learned that the word “*fret*” means “to burn, to get heated up, to become angry.” There is a time & place for anger, but it must be under control. Ephesians 4:26 says, “*Be ye angry, & sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.*” We usually define that as “righteous indignation.” In verse 7 we are told again not to fret or be envious of the wicked & then in verse 8 we are told not to fret or become angry unto sinning. How do we refrain from fretting (or worrying)? Last week we learned that we are to depend upon the Lord, delight in the Lord, & determine for the Lord. The question for the believer is whether or not he will “fret” or “focus.” Tonight I call your attention to verses 23 & 24. I believe it speaks of one who is seeking to focus on the Lord rather than fretting over the wicked. Note as we begin that the word “*good*” is supplied by the translators, yet rightly so when we see the previous contrast between the wicked & the righteous in verses 21-22. Let’s consider tonight the steps of a good man which are arranged, acknowledged, altered, & assured.

### I. The steps of a good man are **arranged** (“*ordered*”) (:23a)

#### A. His steps determined - “*ordered*” >

1. The word means “to be erect, to set up, to establish” (illustrated by the standing up of walls).
2. The word is translated elsewhere as “prepared, fastened, set fast, directed, confirmed, fixed.” Compare Proverbs 16:3, *Commit thy works unto the LORD, & thy thoughts shall be established.*”

#### B. His steps distinguished >

1. They are “steps” not “surges” – “steps” & not “leaps.”
2. They are “little” steps, but lead to big blessing or sin.

#### C. His steps directed >

1. Compare directing our steps to ordaining our days – Psalm 90:12 & 139:16.
2. Consider our steps which take us closer to the Lord or farther from Him.

### II. The steps of a good man are **acknowledged** (“*delighteth in his ways*”) (:23b)

#### A. The Lord’s delight in the good man’s steps?

1. “As God sees that the faithful (“*good man*”) act conscientiously, & do not turn aside from the way which He has appointed, He blesses their efforts” (Calvin).
2. “As parents are pleased with the tottering footsteps of their babes. All that concerns a saint is interesting to his heavenly Father. God loves to view the holy strivings of a soul pressing forward to the skies” (Spurgeon).

Summary: See 37:18 & cf. Psalm 1:6.

#### B. The good man’s delight in the way of the Lord?

1. Does this mean that the good man is delighted in the way God has ordered his life?
2. Are you delighting in the way the Lord has ordered your steps?

III. The steps of a good man are **altered** (“*though he fall...*”) (:24a)

A. Defining his fall >

1. A falling into sin? Or a falling into trouble, difficulty? See II Corinthians 4:9, “*Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.*”
2. Cast down (on his knees, but not his face); but not utterly cast down (finally or fatally).

B. Demonstrating his fall >

1. Like that of Job? Stripped of everything.
2. Like that of Joseph? Sold into slavery & ends up in prison.
3. Like that of Jonah? Swallowed by a great fish, having been cast into the sea.

IV. The steps of a good man are **assured** (“*the LORD upholdeth him with His hand*”) (:24b)

A. Description of “*upholdeth*” >

1. Psalm 145:14, “*The LORD upholdeth all that fall, & raiseth up all those that be bowed down.*”
2. Proverbs 24:16, “*For a just man falleth seven times, & riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.*”

Summary: “Condescendingly, with His own hand, God upholds His saints; He does not leave them to a mere delegated agency, He affords personal assistance” (Spurgeon).

B. Demonstration of “*upholdeth*” >

1. Job receives double for all that he lost.
2. Joseph goes from prison to second in command in Egypt.
3. Jonah reaches land & completes his mission.

Summary: All because of the Lord who upheld them by His hand!

Conclusion: The steps of the believer “*are ordered by the LORD.*” It has been suggested that just as the walls of a house are “custom-made” for that particular house, so the steps of the believer are “custom-made” for his Christian walk. That is parallel to our days which are ordained (Psalm 139:16) & numbered that we might be wise (Psalm 90:12). We can take comfort that the Lord delights in our steps (Psalm 1:6) or be challenged to delight in the way He has arranged our steps (Psalm 40:8). We fall, at times because of our sin; at times just because of trouble or adversity. The promise is that we shall not “*be utterly cast down,*” not finally or fatally. We are assured of His upholding hand, when we need it most. Again I ask you, as I ask myself, “Are we prone to fretting or focusing”? We avoid fretting when we focus on the Lord by depending upon Him, delighting in Him, & when directed by Him. How about you & me tonight?