

Psalm 109

We live in a world in tension. There are only two opposing forces. God loves us; and he has a wonderful plan for our life. We also live in a world that is in rebellion to God. We might consider that to be an oversimplification; but it's not. The saint can become overwhelmed by trying to solve many conflicts that are too large or too difficult. The psalmist feels like he is drowning. The evildoers are having their way with him.

We know that faith is not based on what we see. By the same token, neither is our imagination. So why does our imagination run wild, ravaging our peace...but faith lies back in a more dormant way?

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)

People are following their imagination. That is making us confused and ill. God is allowing us to tangle ourselves in these imaginary scenarios. In the end it is only about how we prioritize Jesus every day. Everything in our life is a prescriptive remedy to restore our spiritual health. Our challengers are our medicine.

God tells us here that he built up the great and terrible Babylon, Medo Persia, Greece and the Roman empire to play their role in the development of Israel. Deuteronomy adds that all nations were formed at the Tower of Babel to further Israel's development. They were instruments to push God's people back to him. In other words: the worldwide monsters and villains were precisely what the Jews were unknowingly needed to self-correct.

Our economic problems, terrorism issues, drug abuse, terrible politicians, and crime are all part of the effects of taking our focus off of God.

Read Psalm 109:1-3: It can seem like it is just us against our critics, or even us against the world at times. God seems to remain quiet and invisible; while we flail around in our fears. It really comes down to who we are allowing to define us. We don't feel like we are carrying the flag of faith as much as we just feel out of step with everyone else. Our imagination does a good job at making us feel that we are losing when we are really winning. One telling observation is that our victories last for a fleeting moment; but our concerns hang around perpetually.

We may feel sincere about our walk with God; but Satan wants us to see ourselves as sincerely confused. Walking the opposite way of this world does not necessarily make

you holy. It does make you odd. It is the prayerful purposefulness of honoring God that makes us holy. That process is going to bring mischaracterizations. To be honest; we should embrace whatever flack that holiness brings...because it will on every level. I have prayed to walk more closely with God; to often find myself neck deep in conflict and confusion immediately afterward. Was God prompting me to pray before the wave of confusion was going to hit...or was that push back from the dark side? I expected a peaceful garden prayer time; but I got a cold splash of water in my face. We cannot be obedient enough or pray our way into a place of continuous serenity. Only The Holy Spirit can come upon us and overshadow all of our competing thoughts. Either way; we need to trust the Holy Spirit in our conflicts (not our eyes and ears). We should stop concluding that we are losing our mind or our holy status. Demons do what they can to harass and demoralize us.

Either we are what the scriptures tell us, or we are what the world says we are. Those two identities are in conflict; and one has to be imaginary. It can be hard to let God be your advocate. We want to correct the record when we are misrepresented. I have discovered that when I make a concerted effort to clear my name; that it ends up becoming an unfavorable result.

Surely even now my witness is in heaven, And my evidence is on high. (Job 16:19)

The scriptures tell us that false accusations do not really stick. They are compared to a little bird's flight; sweeping up and down. But it does not actually ever land.

Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, So a curse without cause shall not alight. (Proverbs 26:2)

Psalm 23 tells that God prepares a place at the table for us *in the presence of our enemies...not in absence of our enemies*. We want to straighten people out and bring things to light; but some people are not looking for the truth. They are committed to an outcome. The spirit of antichrist is pressing to squash the witness of the saints. God vindicates us not because of our great example; but despite our ways.

There are people who see us for what we are, and there are people who do not. The point is not to defend who I am...it's to defend whose I am. The question is: am I comfortable being *a nobody for Jesus*? Is my agenda for today in my daytimer really that important? What about surprise opportunities along the way?

Nehemiah built the wall amidst a bunch of mischaracterizations. He did not lay down his tool to go and argue his point. Even when the work was temporarily stopped from

persecution; it served God's purposes. His actions confirmed who Nehemiah was...not his words.

The devil has many tools; which include discouragement and distraction. Don't chase every rabbit. We can spend all of our time chasing shadows and responding to the promptings of this world if we do not have clear communications with the Holy Spirit. Spiritual development does not happen in absence of opposition. Elijah, David, Joseph and Daniel all were very much at odds with their contemporaries. All of that crazy life-threatening conflict blessed them and elevated them.

Read Psalm 109:4-5: We are geared to expect reciprocity. When we bless others we become blessed. When we curse others we experience more conflict. That is the way it works among like-minded people. What about when we live in a blessing, and things blow up on us? We are not of this world; and that becomes obvious. Watching and experiencing our fellow man can be like fingernails on a chalkboard. We are strange to them....and they are strange to us. In fact, Christians are considered a threat to the lifestyle of sinners.

For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ. (2 Corinthians 2:14-17)

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18)

How do we love those who hate us? How do we handle personal attacks? Does it consume us? One good word picture is of a peaceful dove. Doves seek safe places where they are not being threatened. Doves do not bully other birds. Doves mate for life. They are normally together as couples. Doves represent the presence of the Holy Spirit in some ways. When a dog is turned loose; he might sprint over to attack a dove. That feeling of fear and the threat of violence is a complete disruption and shock to the peaceful family. The bible compares doves to the Holy Spirit inside of us; and dogs to the appetite-driven people of the world. The world may see us as naive and foolish; until hard times come to them. Then they become a bit more curious.

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? (Matthew 5:44-46)

This portion of the psalm describes what happened to Jesus. He brought love and healing. In return he received envy and hatred. He was like a dove in a dog kennel. Even Pontus Pilate clearly saw that the charges against Jesus were based on envy. The High Priests wanted to get rid of the visible standard (Jesus). They didn't want him revealing their sin.

For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy. (Matthew 27:18)

When you look at the effects of envy; it becomes obvious why Jesus was mistreated. Here are the top 10 things that envious people do to you:

1. ***They diminish your accomplishments.*** They accused Jesus of being demonically empowered.
2. ***They talk badly about you.*** They accused Jesus of being an illegitimate son.
3. ***They are extremely competitive with you.*** Whenever the Holy Spirit did a work; all of the locals tried to get on the bandwagon.
4. ***They criticize you and tear you down.*** They tried to undermine Jesus' authority by asking who sent him or told him or gave him authority
5. ***They give you backhanded compliments and use sarcasm.*** Many traps set for Jesus began by saying: "Since you are the son of God..."
6. ***They steal your spotlight.*** The Pharisees had long robes and had trumpets blow when they did good works.
7. ***They are nosey.*** There were malicious spies following Jesus wherever he went, taking meticulous notes.
8. ***They start petty arguments.*** Jesus was forever deflecting frivolous criticisms and pointed questions and petty attempts to declare him as a law breaker; or an enemy of Rome.
9. ***They gloat about themselves.*** The High Priest had a man slap Jesus' face for arguing with him. They boasted about being sons of Abraham
10. ***They give you bad advice.*** The attorneys and religious leaders tried to saddle Jesus with the unpopular (no-win) position of defending a woman caught in adultery. They cornered him about tithing to a corrupt government. They tried numerous ways to set up unpopular or law-breaking answers.

Read Psalm 109:6-15: This is what is called an *imprecatory* psalm. That means that the writer is calling on God to send judgements and curses and destruction upon a sinner. We are to hate sin; and be committed to stop it.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. (Galatians 6:7)

Judgments are prepared for scoffers, And beatings for the backs of fools. (Proverbs 19:29)

Christians should long for justice. The direction that our society is going should bother us. Life on earth should always make us a bit uncomfortable. It is usually not quite what we are looking for.

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. (Romans 12:9)

It is good to hate evil; and yet we are to be merciful. How does this psalm square with what Jesus said about loving your enemies? We are to love the sinner and hate the sin. Getting the sinful tendency out of a man should be what we want. Once a man repents and changes his course; we should be relieved and satisfied. Ultimately, we are calling for repentance; not mere destruction.

We know that sometimes force has to be dealt with force. Sometimes we can observe our enemies changing for good, after they are humbled. Even that change in our enemies can seem unsatisfying at times. Perhaps, we secretly wanted them to experience our pain; instead of being converted. Sometimes my interpretation of other men's motives is so biased; that there is nothing a suspect person could do to demonstrate a change of heart in my eyes. That is why I need to love my enemies. It is really for my own benefit and healing.

One difference between pure hatred and righteousness can come down to the party who executes the judgment. We are not to take vengeance. That poisons our heart and mind. We are not allowed to strike out of hatred.

Do not say, "I will recompense evil"; Wait for the Lord, and He will save you. (Proverbs 20:22)

The good news is that nothing escapes God's judgment. God promised Abraham that he would either bless or curse others; according to how they dealt with Abram's people. We desire that all men would be saved; but if not...at least stop their madness.

I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; (Genesis 12:3)

There are a number of accounts in the bible where a saint was on the warpath to take out a villain. God interrupted them; and took care of it himself. The result was far better than could be imagined. All said; this does not mean that we should not stop a crime in process; or serve in the military. Those who love God hate evil. There are many people who hate sinners, but they do not love God. We can watch the moral-right newscasts as they expose sin; but what about when they make a sport of it for entertainment?

Read Psalm 109:16-20: There are aspects of the Law of Moses that people may not understand. *An eye for an eye* is not a minimum. It's a maximum penalty. You cannot kill a guy because he drove over your rooster. It's also *like-kind in its penalty*; in order to instill an appreciation for the position that we put our neighbors into. When we keep what belongs to another; we owe him that full amount, plus a penalty amount for the inconvenience and loss of use.

Bullys and cruel people may be that way because they have not experienced their own medicine. Sometimes words are not sufficient to make a man reverse his course. The bible calls for a beating to the abusers. It is no different than a child who will not stop until they get paddled. Then they show you respect.

The old saying is that people who have been hurt tend to perpetuate that in others. Some parents perpetuate their childhood abuses from their own parents on their own children. None of us would be that merciful if we were not still vulnerable to the same treatment each time ourselves.

Read Psalm 109:21-25: How can our perspective color our predicament? I may perceive that all is lost; and that I am on the verge of going down the drain. On the other hand, I can just see an event as a little disappointment in my journey. Anxiety can be the result of built up of *worst-case expectations*. "Is that sore spot on my forehead a pimple or another pre-cancerous spot?"

We need to let God drive; and we need to trust him. As long as we are driving, we are also responsible for navigating. We are lying to ourselves if we think that we know what the road ahead holds for us. There is too much to coordinate. Having peace of mind, gives us a more accurate perspective on our problems. God is our guide. We really only have the question of obedience to attend to.

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:26-28)

We really do not want the physician to cut into us unless we are really sick. God is the Great Physician who sees a lot of internal medicine that needs to be addressed. The problem is that we need to be made aware of it; and be willing to receive it. The broken and contrite believer is the healthiest; because they are the most open to giving God a free hand in their affairs.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise. (Psalm 51:17)

It is difficult to live in pain; but the reality of our state is very sobering. That is why riches and success are so deceiving and difficult to receive in a healthy way.

Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. (Revelation 3:17-19)

Read Psalm 109:26-31: There is a big difference between getting lost, afraid and disillusioned in a hardship; versus knowing that God is controlling the storm. One view can leave you feeling helpless and lost. The God-controlled view is a part of a bigger picture to my benefit. The huge storm that Paul experienced at sea became an opportunity

to minister to the soldiers and sailors. It became a tool for more freedom; and ministry en route to Rome.

A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; But it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, And see the reward of the wicked.
(Psalm 91:7-8)

The psalmist does not want his life to point to mere personal failure. He wants God to show up somehow and show the skeptics that his people are well cared for. Spiritual warfare and personal doubt also are also factors. We can begin to feel that we are *dancing in the dark*, and that our lives are completely insignificant. We can begin to feel that our journey is just imagined; and that we are having zero impact. Sometimes when we step in to assist someone we hit a conflict that seems to be non-spiritual. It can be a dispute over our means and methods or our chosen solution. In other words, our spiritual intent has now become a criticism of our technique.

We all want God to show up publicly like a big brother, who is protecting us. We want people to believe in God...and not just think that I am a weird person who imagines such things.