

Psalm 146

God is trying to calm us down in this crazy world. The only way that happens is to focus on God, and trust that he is driving the bus. Specifically, were to focus on Jesus. That is why Jesus is the only visible aspect of the godhead. We try to put together the clues and draw conclusions for our life. Those pieces to our puzzle come as we sit still and consider our savior.

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-33)

Heaven is well organized and not frantic. Heaven is full of praise, not weeping and fear. If we are praising God, we are on the road back to contentment. Some psalms begin in absolute turmoil; but they end in peace. You could say that the Psalms are God's sedatives.

Jesus promised us that every day will have its share of problems. The bible also tells us that we are like skittish sheep, who are easily spooked. We really cannot function well when we are worried or overwhelmed. I can't even pray very well or focus on the bible when I am stressed. God is showing us daily that there is nothing outside of his presence that can protect or comfort us. We cannot even depend on other believers.

Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. (2 Corinthians 5:16)

The things that we see make us uneasy; but we are supposed to focus on what is unseen. We gasp at men's promises. God is showing us that like a baby blanket, we clutch onto people and things and hold them responsible for our happiness. We can never be happy as long as we are doing that. This is part of letting our fleshly nature die. God is telling us to not stomp our feet and protest. That is not God's plan for us. We need to turn this stuff over to him to handle. All of that anxiety is the opposite of walking in the Holy Spirit. Can we be at peace while Rome is burning? We need to get to that point.

For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:4-7)

Read Psalm 146:1-6: This psalm is titled The Happiness of Those Whose Help is the Lord. It does not say, happy are those who have no problems. Those people don't exist. It also does not say happy are those who are accomplishing their goals. Some of my more unhappy times were when I was accomplishing my goals. **The psalmist's problems do not prevent him from overflowing with gratitude, optimism, and zeal for life.** We have a choice at any given moment. We can look at our problems; or we can look at God. There are many ways to get off track.

We can sit by and wait for others to solve our problems. We can second guess others. We can also conclude that it is just an unfixable situation. These are all common ruts.

There was a related situation in the desert when Moses stood before the children of Israel. The children of Israel started complaining about their situation. They did not trust God or Moses. Moses was supposed to be their shepherd. They had issues with his timing, his provisions, his communications, and his direction, etc... They had other ideas. The people were uneasy because they felt out of control. They felt like nobody competent was driving. This is ironic, since they had a pillar of fire every night, and supernatural cloud cover every day, and manna at their tent door every morning. We can get used to almost any level of service. Suddenly, the people found themselves being bitten by poisonous vipers. God used poetic justice to bite the heels of these backbiters. Moses told them to stare at the bronze snake on the pole; instead of looking around at the problem. The lesson to us is that the only cure for anxiety and complaining is to re-focus on God. If we find ourselves dissatisfied or distraught, we need to re-focus on God. If we refuse to do that, God will allow us to get into worsening situations that *force* us to turn to God.

Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live."

(Numbers 21:4-8)

Staring at the serpent on the pole is symbolic for looking upon our sin; and also focusing on the one who became our sin.

This psalm is about the importance of not relying on others to live up to their responsibilities. Men are weak, distracted and sinful. God will come through every time. God does not show us his greatness by making us perfect. He is *making something out of nothing in our lives*.

If we are not happy, we might be looking too closely at others who are letting us down. Envy is looking too closely at others. Anyone can sit in the back row with a toothpick in their mouth and a scorecard judging someone else. Anyone can collect the failures of their loved ones and hang onto failed expectations. Anyone can just turn on the news and find someone in power who has let us down once again. Those expectations and blame-placing are the opposite of what this psalm is about. The writer of this psalm does not put too much hope in *the moral majority*.

Read Psalm 146:7-10: These verses prophecy about the evidence surrounding the true messiah. As the confused rabbis studied the prophetic writings concerning the Messiah they realized that most Messianic prophecies seem to fall into two categories. The Messiah was to be both someone who died on our behalf and a Redeemer who would be victorious and rule forever over the Messianic Kingdom. To explain what seemed like a contradiction they falsely concluded that there must be two different Messiahs. The one who would suffer and die was given the title Mashiach ben Yosef (Messiah son of Joseph) and one who would reign as king was given the title Mashiach ben David (Messiah son of David). We know better; but Jesus still had to address this confusion.

Verses 7-10 were only partially fulfilled at Jesus' first coming. John the Baptist's disciples had been getting ready for The suffering-Messiah (the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world). John the Baptist ended up in jail. His disciples found Jesus and essentially asked him if he was The Messiah. John knew he was the Lamb of God; but what about the coming king-Messiah? John the Baptist likely sent his disciples to question Jesus because of his confusion over the Jewish teaching of two Messiahs. John knew Jesus to be the Messiah, the Lamb of God as he declared in John 1 and witnessed in Luke 3, but he probably assumed Jesus was only the suffering Prophet (i.e., a "lamb" led to slaughter). Therefore, John the Baptist also expected a second Messiah to eventually come.

Then at some point, John the Baptist began to understand that Jesus was both the Prophet and the Christ. Therefore, John's question in Luke 7 was an inquiry as to whether Jesus was also the conquering Christ that John was still expecting. Jesus' response to John's question made reference to miracles found in prophecies of Isaiah that were associated with the conquering Christ, so it appears Jesus was answering John's question in the affirmative by pointing to these miracles as proof that He was the expected Christ.

And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me." (Matthew 11:2-6)

John the Baptist had an opportunity to enter the priesthood. His dad was a priest. Instead, he went out of town, into the country to commune with God and study scripture. He rejected the path of formal religion. John was an answered prayer of his parents. He was dedicated to God. He would help his people turn back to God. When we think of John the Baptist we think of hell, fire and brimstone messages. John was full of joy.

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and

shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:13-17)

What was John the Baptist's focus? He wanted to get to the bottom line of the faith. He was doing his homework in the scriptures and in prayer. We can tell that John the Baptist read Isaiah. The book of Isaiah has been called the miniature bible. The Old Testament has 39 books. The book of Isaiah starts with 39 chapters of failure and judgement. The New Testament has 29 books of a better way to reconcile with God. Isaiah 40-66 (29 chapters) is all about God and man being reunited.

"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" Says your God. "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the LORD's hand Double for all her sins." The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. (Isaiah 40:1-3)

And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, Even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, The excellency of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, The excellency of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, And make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert. (Isaiah 35:2-6)

The ultimate fulfillment will be at the second coming. Jesus did not begin to reign on earth forever at his first coming.