

Counseling Your Soul in the Midst of Adversity and Uncertainty

Psalm 11...When the Foundations Are Shaking

The Threat...11:2...For, behold, the wicked bend the bow,
They make ready their arrow upon the string
To shoot in darkness at the upright in heart.

The Question 11:3... If the foundations are destroyed,
What can the righteous do?

The Response 11:4-7...

4 The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven;
His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.
5 The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked,
And the one who loves violence His soul hates.
6 Upon the wicked He will rain snares;
Fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup.
7 For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness;
The upright will behold His face.

As God can protect His people under the greatest despotism, so the utmost civil liberty is no safety to them without the immediate protection of His Almighty arm. I fear that Christians in this country have too great a confidence in political institutions...[rather] than of the government of God.

Alexander Carson (Ireland, 1776-1849)

God's people have no assurances that the dark experiences of life will be held at bay, much less that God will provide some sort of running commentary on the meaning of each day's allotment of confusion, boredom, pain, or achievement. It is no great matter where we are, provided we see that the Lord has placed us there, and that He is with us.

John Newton

Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God.

Martin Luther

It is natural...for us to trust in ourselves. It is so natural, and so confirmed by the habits of a lifetime, that no ordinary difficulties or perplexities avail to break us of it. It takes all God can do to root up our self-confidence. He must reduce us to despair...It is out of this despair that the superhuman hope is born. It is out of this abject helplessness that the soul learns to look up with new trust to God...

How do most of us attain to any faith in Providence? Is it not by proving, through numberless experiments, that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps? Is it not by coming, again and again, to the limit of our resources, and being compelled to feel that unless there is a wisdom and a love at work on our behalf, immeasurably wiser and more benign than our own, life is a moral chaos?... Only desperation opens our eyes to God's love.

James Denney

Lamentations 3...Utter Ruin. Lost Hope?

Note 1st person pronouns in Lamentations 3...I, me

3:21...a turning point!

This I recall to my mind,
Therefore I have hope.

What does Jeremiah recall?

22 The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease,
For His compassions never fail.

23 *They* are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.

24 "The Lord is my portion," says my soul,
"Therefore I have hope in Him."

25 The Lord is good to those who wait for Him,
To the person who seeks Him.

26 *It is* good that he waits silently
For the salvation of the Lord.

27 *It is* good for a man that he should bear
The yoke in his youth.

Note 3:28ff

28 Let him sit alone and be silent
Since He has laid *it* on him.

29 Let him put his mouth in the dust,
Perhaps there is hope.

30 Let him give his cheek to the smiter,
Let him be filled with reproach.

31 For the Lord will not reject forever,

32 For if He causes grief,

Then He will have compassion

According to His abundant lovingkindness.

God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart.

Charles Spurgeon

Trust the past to God's mercy, the present to God's love and the future to God's providence.

Augustin

A gracious soul may look through the darkest cloud and see God smiling on him.

Thomas Brooks

Psalm 37...God's Prescription (Our Biblical Response to Evildoers & Workers of Iniquity)

The Imperatives... 37:1,3,4,5,7,8,27,34

1Do not fret because of evildoers,
Be not envious toward wrongdoer

3Trust in the Lord and do good;
Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.

4 Delight yourself in the Lord;
And He will give you the desires of your heart.

5Commit your way to the Lord,
Trust also in Him, and He will do it.

7Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him;
Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,

8Cease from anger and forsake wrath;
Do not fret; it leads only to evildoing.

27Depart from evil and do good,
So you will abide forever.

34Wait for the Lord and keep His way,
And He will exalt you to inherit the land;
When the wicked are cut off, you will see it.

The Rationale ("for")...37:2,9,13,17,22,28,29,37

2For they will wither quickly like the grass
And fade like the green herb.

9 For evildoers will be cut off,
But those who wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land.

13 The Lord laughs at him,
For He sees his day is coming.

17 For the arms of the wicked will be broken,
But the Lord sustains the righteous.

22 For those blessed by Him will inherit the land,
But those cursed by Him will be cut off.

28 For the Lord loves justice
And does not forsake His godly ones;
They are preserved forever,
But the descendants of the wicked will be cut off.

29 The righteous will inherit the land
And dwell in it forever.

37 Mark the blameless man, and behold the upright;
For the man of peace will have a posterity.

Note verse 31...The law of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip.

Note verse 3...Trust in Him, and Do Good

Trust in the Lord and do good;

That's what it means to live by faith – God reveals Himself to us, and we respond to Him trustingly, taking Him at His Word.

Iain Duguid

In order to trust God, we must always view our adverse circumstances through the eyes of faith, not of sense. And just as the faith of salvation comes through hearing the message of the gospel (Romans 10:17), so the faith to trust God in adversity comes through the Word of God alone. It is only in the Scriptures that we find an adequate view of God's relationship to and involvement in our painful circumstances.

It is only from the Scriptures, applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that we receive the grace to trust God in adversity.

Jerry Bridges

A Negative Example...and Its Resolution

Psalm 73...The Peril of Capitulating to Fear and Anxiety

Note 73:21,22...21 When my heart was embittered
And I was pierced within,
22 Then I was senseless and ignorant;
I was *like* a beast before You.

**Questioning God's commitment to upholding justice, vindicating/
preserving the righteous and judging/punishing the wicked**

The Resolution...73:23-28

23 Nevertheless I am continually with You;
You have taken hold of my right hand.
24 With Your counsel You will guide me,
And afterward receive me to glory.
25 Whom have I in heaven *but* You?
And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.
26 My flesh and my heart may fail,
But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
27 For, behold, those who are far from You will perish;
You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You.
28 But as for me, the nearness of God is my good;
I have made the Lord God my refuge,
That I may tell of all Your works.

Your thoughts about God are all too human.

Martin Luther (in his rebuke of Erasmus)

When Luther rebuked Erasmus for thinking "too human" thoughts of God, then, he was criticizing him for failing to grasp the *immanence* of God, for failing to realize the lengths God went to in the incarnation in order to rescue his people.

Luther's rebuke of Erasmus is a warning to us all. Let us not fall into the trap of thinking "too human" thoughts of God, of failing, in other words, to appreciate that God goes to much greater lengths -- or rather, depths -- than we creatures could ever anticipate or dream to be *with* us, to accomplish our salvation and to restore us to eternal fellowship with his Triune self.

<https://www.reformation21.org/blogs/your-thoughts-about-god-are-al.php>

A Positive Example...and Its Ultimate Model

Psalm 16...a Messianic Psalm With a Message for Those in Great Distress

The Foundations of Hope for the Faithful...

Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You.

Submitting to the Covenant Keeping God as Master

² I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
I have no good besides You."

Meditating on the Counsel of an All-Wise God

⁷ I will bless the LORD who has counseled me;
Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night.

Unshakeable Confidence in a Never-Failing God

⁸ I have set the LORD continually before me;
Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.
⁹ Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will dwell securely.

Pleading the Promises of an Always-Faithful God

¹⁰ For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.
¹¹ You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

When God gives a promise, He always tries our faith. Just as the roots of trees take firmer hold when they are contending with the wind, so faith takes a firmer hold when it struggles with adverse appearances.

Robert Murray McCheyne

From Spurgeon...Morning and Evening (Excerpts)

“It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man.”

Psalm 118:8

Doubtless the reader has been tried with the temptation to rely upon the things which are seen, instead of resting alone upon the invisible God... Can you trust him for your soul's redemption, and not rely upon him for a few lesser mercies? Is not God enough for thy need, or is his all-sufficiency too narrow for thy wants? Dost thou want another eye beside that of him who sees every secret thing? Is his heart faint? Is his arm weary? If so, seek another God; but if he be infinite, omnipotent, faithful, true, and all-wise, why goest thou abroad so much to seek another confidence? Why dost thou rake the earth to find another foundation, when this is strong enough to bear all the weight which thou canst ever build thereon? Christian...do not alloy thy gold of faith with the dross of human confidence. Wait thou only upon God, and let thine expectation be from him...

Paul Tautges on Psalm 46 and Trusting God in Times of Crisis

Psalm 46 offers us a foundation for trusting God in times of crisis. The primary emphasis of this psalm is not on trying to guess when and where storms will come, but to always realize that God is our only true, safe place. The emphasis is on knowing the God who is the source of protection and rest in the midst of the storms. God rarely indicates when a storm is coming. But he does provide protection and comfort in the storm. We must learn to “hide” in God, finding our strength, our peace, and our rest in Him. The psalmist writes: *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*

God wants our trust in Him to grow as we consider and respond to three stabilizing encouragements. In times of crisis we need to...

1. Trust God as our unshakable refuge in trouble (vv. 1-3).
2. Trust God as our undying river of life (vv. 4-7).
3. Trust God as our unbeatable ruler over all (vv. 8-11).

Often, we wish God would provide advance warning of the storms of life. But God typically does not warn us ahead of time. Though he does not hide the truth that we will face troubles, hardships, and difficulties in this life, in a general sense (John 16:33; 1 Peter 4:12), he does not reveal the particulars of our suffering. If He did, we would likely be inclined to walk by sight rather than by faith. We would try to control our own lives, avoiding the pain, rather than learning to trust him and his goodness, his promise. Above all else, we must learn that He is in control. And when the fierce storms of life come, we must not be ashamed to run and hide in God. Rest assured that His grip on you is stronger than your grip on Him. Run and hide in God as your refuge and strength, your ever-present help in times of trouble.

Paul Tautges on Trusting God in Times of Crisis