

“Be Still and Know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10a)

Mathews Barnabas Metropolitan

Though the world is full of God’s blessings, we have to face sufferings which make us anxious and afraid. The cause of sufferings is not known in many cases. The Psalmist is giving us the assurance that God is our refuge in times of sufferings and that we need not lose hope. We note the cases in which God avoids sufferings, brings good out of sufferings and leads us to higher blessings in the life after death.

To be still means to be at peace, free from anxiety and fear. Suffering causes hatred, enmity, revenge, competition and jealousy, which cause anxiety and fear. As God avoids sufferings and brings good out of sufferings we need not be anxious.

The Psalmist says, “God is our refuge and strength, a present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change though mountains shake in the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult... The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge... He makes the wars cease to the end of the earth, he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the chariots with fire” (Psalm 46:1-9).

1) God avoids sufferings

When suffering is beyond our power to overcome, God will avoid it. “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to men and God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

We find God interfering with the history of mankind in critical moments in the Old Testament times. For example, God gave warning to Noah before the flood and he and his family were saved through an ark. In the time of slavery in

Egypt, God sent plagues to the Egyptians and delivered the Israelites from Egypt. When the Israelites came to the Red Sea, they were saved through a path made in the sea by separating the sea into two halves. When the Israelites came to the fort of Jericho, the fort was pulled down in a mysterious way. God helped David to kill the giant Goliath with a stone's throw. God protected the three boys who were cast into the furnace in Babylon. God saved Daniel who was cast into the lions' den.

We find how infant Jesus was saved from Herod's attempt to kill Him by asking Joseph to get away from that country with the infant.

2) God helps us to overcome sufferings

God is helping us to overcome sufferings. Diseases are cured through medicines and prayer. "Who forgives all our iniquity, who heals all our diseases" (Psalm 103:3) says the Psalmist. We read that our Lord healed all kinds of diseases. In the Old Testament God gave Manna from heaven and water from the rocks. Our Lord fed a multitude, multiplying five loaves and two fish.

3) God blesses sinners also

We find that God blessed the sinners also. Jacob was blessed by God even though he was a sinner who cheated his brother twice. Our Lord healed the paralytic though he was a sinner (St. John 5:14).

Our Lord converted sinners and made them enjoy spiritual bliss. Zacheus the tax collector, the immoral Samaritan woman, the criminal on the cross and Saul who persecuted the church are examples for this.

4) God gives higher blessings in the other world

In the case of great calamities like earthquakes and hurricanes we hope that the victims will be blessed in the other world. See how Lazarus who was in the worst conditions in this world was taken to Abraham's bosom, the highest place in paradise. It is when we concentrate on this world alone that we wonder why innocents suffer.

5) Benefits of suffering

God can bring good out of sufferings. Even our Lord was perfected in obedience through His sufferings. “Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered” (Heb. 5:8).

St. Paul says “suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope” (Romans 5:3, 4). He disciplines us for our good that we may share his holiness (Heb. 12:10).

Suffering makes us humble as we are not sure about our future. It is humility that gives birth to all good things including love. Suffering creates self sacrificing love in us as we know that there is the possibility of sufferings coming to anyone at anytime.

There should not be an occasion in which we lose hope as our Lord is with us in all circumstances. He identifies with us wholeheartedly so that all our sufferings will be experienced as His own sufferings. Then God will do the maximum to help us to overcome the sufferings.

Besides overcoming our sufferings, we should identify ourselves with others in their sufferings and help them to overcome their sufferings, for the glory of God.