

**MEDITATION 22, Psalms 44, 45, 46:**  
**“The LORD Demands Obedience Over Religious Observance.”**

*“You make us a byword among the nations, a laughing stock among the nations... yet we have not forgotten you, or been false to your covenant. Our hearts have not gone astray, nor have our feet swayed from your path...it is for your sake that we are slain all day long, that we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” Psalm 44:15, 18, 19, 23*

*“Take heed, and note, incline your ear: forget your people and your father’s house, and let the king be aroused by your beauty; since he is your Lord, bow to him.” 45:11-12*

*“Desist! Realize I am God! I dominate the nations; I dominate the earth!” 46:11*

Would a person dare criticize God and accuse of Him unfairness? Yes. Israel had gone out to war and suffered a stunning defeat. The land was occupied and the people humiliated. Our Psalmist saw no justification for what happened! Was not Israel righteous, had not the people performed all the religious rites they were supposed to do? God had unfairly abandoned the nation! National defeat was God’s fault. He must have been sleeping, must have forgotten His people. “Wake up God, do what you used to do!”

The prophets of the LORD were sent to correct the wrong thinking of His people. The LORD had a very long and detailed list of what Israel had done wrong. Few of the charges were “religious” in nature. Israel was not at fault in their religious zeal! Most of the charges the LORD had against them were regarding their treatment of other people! They had not cared for the poor, the orphans, the widows and the strangers. The powerful seized the lands of the weak. People were held in bondage as slaves. Foreigners residing in the land were mistreated. The rich and powerful loved drunken parties, violence and were sexually immoral. Yet because they maintained their temple worship and professed themselves believers in the LORD they had convinced themselves that they were righteous! Not even judgment from shook their confidence in their own righteousness!

Can a people lie to God? Of course. Is God deceived? Of course not. The unpleasant truth is that God demands more than we acknowledge. He demands we pay attention not to the parts of His word that suit us but to every word that proceeds out of His mouth. Personal and national salvation depends upon obedience to all His word! Wealth, family, nation, political party, religion are all meaningless when as a people who pick and choose what part of God’s word we will honor. Open up a Bible, read some passages you may never have read. Know how God expects His people to treat other people: Exodus 23:9, Deuteronomy 10:18, 15:7-11, 27:19; Proverbs 22:16, 31:9; Isaiah 1:17, 5:25, Zechariah 7:9-10, Jeremiah 7:5-7, 22:13-17, Amos 5:11-18, Ezekiel 16:49-50; Mark 10:21-25; Luke 11:39-42; James 4:1-3, 5:1-5; 1<sup>st</sup> John 3:17

***Prayer: “Lord, I have read more of your word and confess that I and my people are not as righteous as we think we are. Our sins are as many as those we call sinners. Forgive my self-righteous pride, save me from myself, save my people from themselves! Amen.”***