

## Overwhelmed – A Quiet Soul

*Psalm 131; from the series, "Little Psalms for Big Problems"*

*Message from the Master broadcast December 9, 2007 by Pastor Jeremy Mattek*

I don't know if you realize that Christmas is just around the corner. Maybe you have noticed, and you've already started looking for the perfect gift for the kids, and your parents, and your best friend, and the neighbor you hardly ever talk to but they got you something last year and you'll look really bad if you don't get them something this year. Oh, and then there's the office gift exchange with the \$25 limit that everyone goes over, but I'm not sure I have enough money to go over, and I'm not sure if the gift I get will look like a gift that was a bit more expensive. Of course, maybe I'll find that treasure at the dollar store this year like I did that one year, the one that looks like it was \$30 but really only cost one dollar.

And then there's the meal I have to make. No wait, the meals I have to make and the dishes I have to bring along to the other parties. And I have to make sure the kids will have the right clothes to wear. When am I going to go shopping for that? Maybe they can wear what they wore last year. No, someone will notice, and they won't say anything. They'll just give me that look that says they know and they don't like it.

But at least Christmas only comes around once a year. Then I can get back to the regular stress of life like my back hurting, and dealing with the pain of being cheated on, and soldiers dying overseas, and taxes going up, and the devil knowing just where to attack me. And my mother fell – again, and now she might have to live in a nursing home, and I know she's scared to live in a nursing home. But I don't want to bring it up because she'll yell at me. And I don't want her to yell at me, at least not during the holidays, because, dog-gone-it, this is the happiest time of the year – if I make it all the way through it this year.

Do you ever feel overwhelmed? Do you ever feel like the stress in your life is about to crush you? It can. Christy Henrich, as a teenager, ranked among America's best gymnasts. But a judge once told her that at 95 pounds, spread over a 4-foot-11 frame, she was too fat to make the 1988 Olympic team. So she began starving herself, subsisting some days on an apple or just an apple slice. If she ate more, she would force herself to vomit. She missed making the Olympics by a fraction of a point. The highest she ever got in her profession was a fourth place finish in the uneven parallel bars in 1989's world championships. Five years later, as her weight fell to 52 pounds -- she died at age 22 in a Kansas City hospital of multiple organ system failure. 22 years young and overwhelmed by pressure to succeed, excel, and perform, Christy crumbled. She couldn't take it.

Don't you wonder why God lets that happen? Do you wonder why God puts so much on your shoulders? There are all these things that you *want* to do. And then, of course, there are all these things that you *need* to do. And a lot of times it just seems like it's all too much to do. And don't you sometimes wonder if God knows that? And you pray and pray and ask God to help you out and relieve some stress because you see yourself getting close to the breaking point. And you don't want to do anything dangerous like starve and eventually kill yourself. You just want some help. You just want to be able to get through life. Maybe a good place to go for advice is to a guy who had quite a bit going on in his life. King David had a lot on his plate. David never really wanted anything more than to just tend the sheep, protect the flock, and get through every day. But before he knew it, God anointed him to be king. Oh, and the king he'd be replacing didn't end up liking him. He even tried to kill him a couple of times. So David had to run away – from his own kingdom, and hide – from his own people. And once that got settled, he still had a divided nation to deal with. And he got himself into a heap of trouble by killing a man after he realized he got his wife pregnant, and then he struggled to carry a heavy load of guilt after recognizing his sin. And, it seemed like he was always at war. And, as king, you're always up to your forehead in the war. And, on top of that there were all these expectations of being God's chosen king for God's chosen people. Do you think David dealt with stress?

You wouldn't know it by our psalm today. King David wrote a very short, but eternally sweet work of comfort for our overworked and often overwhelmed lives. He said, **My heart is not proud, O Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, put your hope in the Lord both now and forevermore.**

Oh, the life of a child, wouldn't that be great sometimes? Babies have no responsibilities but to eat, sleep, and fill their diapers. And even with those things, the parents end up worrying about them more than the baby does. If the baby's hungry, they're fed. If they fill their pants, they're changed. If they make a big mess with it, they don't clean it up. And if they want to sleep, they just do, and they typically have a whole army of

overprotective, sleep-deprived parents making sure they do. But our adult lives don't much resemble a baby's life, do they? They don't. And neither did David's. David didn't say his life was like a baby's, with no responsibility. He said it was like that of a weaned child with its mother, and weaned children have responsibilities.

If a child is weaned, it means they are not totally dependant on mom to live. It means that mommy's not feeding them anymore, that not everything is taken care of for them, that they have things to do – clothes to put away, teeth to brush, bedtimes to keep, school work to finish, chores to do. David described himself as a weaned child because weaned children have responsibilities, just like he did and just like you do. And he described himself more fully as a weaned child *with its mother* because, along with all the responsibilities God gave him came a very significant relationship that God gave him.

There is nothing like a healthy parent-child relationship. Parents have so much love for their children. And because of that love, parents cannot stand to have anything bad happen to their kids. A number of weeks ago, my wife and I took our four children to the doctor to get tested for lead poisoning. We had some lead paint removed from the house, and we needed to make sure the kids weren't affected. We took them all to the doctor where they were going to get their fingers pricked so they would bleed and the blood would be tested. Well, our kids can't stand to have their fingers pricked. Our 6-year old daughter was a wreck the moment she walked in. She started crying immediately, which made our 3-year old son start crying, which meant that his younger brother, who does everything his older brother does, started crying. Our 4-year old daughter didn't cry. She has a great deal of pride in her toughness, but when it came time to get her finger pricked, she cried more than all the rest. And then I looked at my wife's face, and she was crying because moms protect their kids and keep them safe and keep the pain away. And because I couldn't stand to see my wife cry, I almost started crying. But we didn't stop it from happening. As much as we hated what all our children were going through, we didn't stop it from happening because we knew that soon it would all be ending. My wife was going to take them to McDonalds for ice cream after this, and we knew that by then the kids wouldn't feel any pain.

Pain happens on this earth. David knew that. He knew that problems happen on earth too. He experienced a lot of them. But in his parent-child relationship with God, he also knew that some day they would no longer affect him, that some day he would come home to a place where pain, problems, and stress could not affect him. His Father had told him about heaven.

You know, the bible never describes what heaven looks like. Typically, when someone asks you to describe heaven, you may identify things like the streets of gold, the crystal sea, the tree of life, and gates made of expensive jewelry. And those things are in the bible, but they aren't in there to tell us what we will see in heaven. Rather, these are symbols God uses to describe the pure serenity of how we will feel in heaven.

In the book of Luke, Jesus says we will be like the angels, which means your body can't deteriorate or break down. Your back can't hurt. Your head can't ache. There are no scary-looking nurses with blood to take.

You'll be like the angels in that you'll never die, which means you'll never cry, and you'll never feel sad. And the empty hole that appears in your soul when you lose someone here, it will never appear.

In heaven, everyone there will be a perfect child of God, which means there will be no one to cheat on you, no one to abuse you, no one to belittle, hurt, or confuse you; but only people who will every second bless you.

In heaven, Jesus says, we are children of the resurrection, which means there is no destruction; no accidents on the street, no decisions you regret; just the kind of pain-free living none of us have experienced yet. You will have no problems, pain, or stress in heaven.

And why Jesus lets those things touch you here, well, he has his reasons. And only he knows his reasons.

Maybe it's because he knows there's a way you need to grow, or there's some lesson you haven't yet learned. Or maybe he just wants to remind you of how painful this world is so you don't get yourself too attached to it. But whatever the reason, don't use the pain, problems, and stress that affect you as an excuse to doubt the love Jesus has for you.

This is the Jesus who was arrested for you, condemned for you, who put his vulnerable life into the hands of people who hated him, just for you. This is the Jesus whose back was ripped open for you. His scalp was gouged with thorns for you, his skin broken, blood outpoured, and strength entirely sapped just for you. And after all that happened to him, he looked out at the people who put him there, the people who doubted his love and questioned his heart, and rather than condemn you, he embraced you – so closely that your dirty sins stained his holy heart. And when God, with his anger swelling up inside him, looked to punish those he put his target on him so it would never touch you, so that the hell Jesus suffered on the cross would never be felt

by you, so that you would know that heaven is something you can look forward to.

And until you get there, know that God tends to look at responsibility a bit differently than we typically do. When Michael Jordan was playing for the Chicago Bulls, if the outcome of the game was ever in doubt, his teammates always got the ball into Michael Jordan's hands. They didn't complain that he took too many shots. They didn't want everyone to get equal responsibility at the end of the game. They put the responsibility squarely on Jordan's shoulders because they knew he could handle it and, in most cases, he would excel with it.

God is the same way when he dishes out responsibility to his Christians. If he sees you managing your Christian responsibilities well, he is going to reward you with more responsibilities so that you can do even more things well and more will be accomplished in his kingdom. This comes up in many of Jesus' parables. Again and again, those servants who manage a little responsibility well are rewarded with even more. In the parable of the minas, the servant who doubled his master's treasure was rewarded with 10 cities to manage and given even the money that the unfaithful servant had mismanaged.

Isn't this quite different from how we naturally think? We're inclined to think that I will work hard so that I can earn some rest and a vacation and some down-time. Our goal is often to end up with less responsibility. Isn't that the whole idea behind retirement? But God doesn't think like that. Because every single person is always on God's mind, and because there are so many people who don't yet know God's love, if he sees a Christian being responsible with little, he will give them more.

And often, it will seem as though there's nothing in it for you. And in most cases, you'll be right. A lot of times, extending yourself so that someone else might be happy like you are and have the hope that you do won't give you any earthly benefit, just like there was none for Jesus. How did it benefit him to expose himself to so much sickness, sin, and sadness; to go through such mental agony that he sweat drops of blood, and to bathe himself in that sweat while he hung on his deathbed? It didn't. But it did benefit you, which is the only reason he needed to do it.

And now it's our turn because God is handing us so many opportunities to do this. A lot of times we look at all the things we're responsible for in our lives (my job, bills, volunteer time, parents, kids, spouse, friends, hobbies) and we get discouraged and think, "Man, I've got so much to do, and that stinks." But God looks at the same situation and says, "My child is busy, and it's great because he can handle this responsibility." And you can. Even if you've never done it before, you can.

Moses had never led a nation. David had never been king. Solomon had never decided a thing. Mary had never given birth to the Savior of the world. But God gave these responsibilities to them because he knew they could handle them.

God knows you can handle it. Whatever it is, you can handle it. Even if you've never done it before, you can handle it. If it's another kid, you can handle it. If it's another job, you can handle it. If it's your aging parents, you can handle it. If you're the aging parent, you can handle it. If it's a new position at church, you can handle it. If it's 5, 10, 15, 20, 50 different responsibilities, you can handle it because the God who loves you has allowed it.

And the Lord knows you need to rest. That's why he gives you heaven. It's why he brought you into his family, so that you would know that soon and very soon that time is coming. But the time to rest is not now. There are too many souls who need saving, too many hearts who need healing, too many people who need to know the God who gives eternal rest to your soul.