

How is God at Work?

What is God doing today?

I have often taught that God is always at work. This is not my idea, it was Jesus' explicit statement. "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working" (John 5:17 NIV 2011). This observation of Jesus originally had a direct reference to his own works of charity and miraculous signs.

But in our day, Jesus' teaching leads to a natural follow-up question, "What is God doing today?" People look around and see many troubling things: wars, increasing immorality, children being abused, racial prejudice, and the untimely deaths from cancer to name just a few. The more of these kinds of things we see, the more urgent the question becomes, "What is God doing?"

A Psalm helps answer our question

The Psalm for this week in my devotional material for this year is Psalm 146. As I read this Psalm through the second time and third time, I decided that the question I am asking in this article must've been on the mind of the Psalm writer for he penned a profound three-verse answer (vv.7-9). His immediate reason for listing God's actions is to support his thesis statement in verse five, "Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God." But his arguments also serve to answer our question concerning the spheres of the activity of God.

For today's world, I have used Smart Art to list them but the nine answers are from the inspired text, helping us with the question, "What is God doing?"

God is at work!

[God] upholds the cause of the oppressed

[He] gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets prisoners free,

The Lord gives sight to the blind,

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down,

The Lord loves the righteous.

The Lord watches over the foreigner

[God] sustains the fatherless and the widow,

[He] frustrates the ways of the wicked.

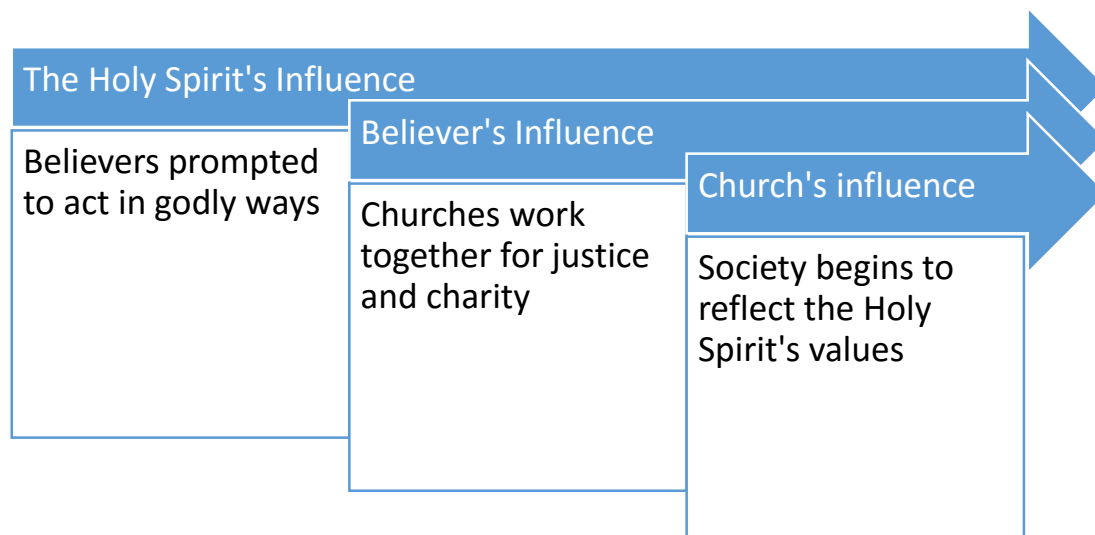
(Text from Psalm 146:7-9 NIV 2011)

Jesus' followers are his agents in this world

How does God work at these things? In today's world, he works at them through his Holy Spirit. Even more specifically, the Holy Spirit guides believers to do the work of God. We are his agents in the world. For example, God is at work giving food to the hungry when believers collect food for Thanksgiving. For a contemporary example, God was at work upholding the cause of the oppressed when Christian people gave generously to help beat back the Ebola epidemic in West Africa.

God is at work on deeper levels too

Like in computers, there are also meta levels on which the truths of Psalm 146 operate. On one such deeper level, God is at work achieving these ends when the culture in which Christians live catches the Judeo-Christian values which are inculcated in a list like this. This happens when Christians are successfully the "salt of the earth," that is, their influence makes a difference in the attitude of their whole society. For example, many Christians are speaking up today on behalf of immigrants, foreigners and refugees.



Also on a deeper level, I believe that God directs spiritual forces to favor those He chooses to favor and to frustrate those he chooses to oppose. The Psalm says He loves the righteous and frustrates the wicked. In doing so, God upholds values He desires. For example, there is a principal at work in society that generosity begets generosity while miserliness also begets the same. God has, so to speak, stacked the deck to favor in the long run his kind of values.

So the next time I wonder, "What is God doing?" I intend to break out my Bible and reread Psalm 146. I'm sure it will set my thinking on the right track.