

Becoming Anti-Fragile

By Bobby Schuller

I want you to know as we finish the series on Winning the Worry War, we basically have been saying the same thing and today I'm going to sort of cap it off with what it means to be Pasqual – the Pasqual Mystery, and I'm going to look at it through the philosophical lens of Nicholas Taleb, the idea of the anti-fragile and we're going to explain all of that.

But first, if you hear anything, I want you to know today that if Christ is in you, you are a lot stronger than you know. In your baptism, you are given something that is utterly limitless in its power. And I want you this morning to discover what that means in your life, particularly when little things, or big things that feel like deaths happen, what that actually does in your life and why you can stop worrying today about what's going to happen tomorrow.

Jesus tells us this. In the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chapter 6, one of the most famous parts of the Sermon on the Mount, one of my favorite parts, He says “but seek first” – what? “His kingdom and His righteousness.” Then what? “All these things will be given to you,” as well. All these things He's talking about are health issues, material issues, opportunities, etc., every Bible scholar, as uncomfortable it is to read that, would agree that the context of this passage is that

when you seek first His righteousness, you'll have everything you need, your daily bread.

And then He goes on to say "therefore," everybody say therefore. Remember what Ed Stetzer said last week? When you see a therefore, you need to know what it's there for, right? "Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

I don't know about you, but when I read that "don't worry about tomorrow," it sounds nice but when I try to do it, it's really hard! Especially if I'm going through a hard time. It's really hard to not do something, especially when it comes to thinking. Like if I told all of you don't think of a purple elephant, right? It's the classic example. Don't think about what a purple elephant would look like. Don't picture it having a sombrero on. Don't picture it standing on its hind legs, doing a Macarena. It's like, okay I'm trying really hard.

So when Jesus says don't worry, He's basically saying don't think about this certain thing, but that passage does not stand alone. It's built on the passage that precedes it. That if we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, we don't need to worry about tomorrow. And this is at the heart of what it means to live a worry free life. There is no way to just choose to like stop worrying all the time, especially if you're in a bad spot, you know? If you're in a war zone, how do you just not worry? If you've got kids, how do you not worry?

And the answer is basically this that we have to discover within ourselves the Pasqual Mystery, which I'll get to in a second. We have to stop trying to figure out what's going to happen tomorrow because even though tomorrow is known by God, it cannot be known by us. And so we experience the world as chaos. The worst things that have ever happened to people, they didn't see it coming. When we base the worst thing that can happen tomorrow, based on the worst thing that happened yesterday, that's also a mistake in risk management.

So first of all, we have to just understand we will never be able to predict all the horrible, terrible things that are going to happen tomorrow, and we're also going to be unable to predict all the wonderful, marvelous and miraculous things that are going to happen in our lives tomorrow. We simply need to not worry about tomorrow.

Well how do we do that? It's not by trying harder, it's by becoming Pasqual; by becoming anti-fragile. In other words, it's by discovering that within us, in our baptism we were given a gift, and that gift is simply this: anytime you are harmed, anytime you are attacked, anytime you experience a death in your life, if you respond with faith, new life will spring forth from it. That is the Pasqual Mystery.

The Pasqual Mystery is an ancient Christian thing. It's not a new idea, it's an old idea that's been forgotten. We only talk about it on Easter. But the Pasqual Mystery is that when things in Christ die, they will come back to life with greater power. This then seeps into all of our

lives. So when you were baptized, you were given death. Did you know that? You were given the death of Christ, but you were also given the life of Christ. So that for you, as a believer, when you experience pain, anguish, death, loss, if you respond with faith, the promises that the Pasqual life within you will spring forth into new life.

This is what Jesus is talking about when He says in John chapter 12, verse 24, “very truly I tell you unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” He’s talking about His own death there. Or in 2nd Corinthians 7-12, the passage says “but we have this treasure in jars of clay,” Paul is talking to the church now, “to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” Do you know what that all-surpassing power is He’s talking about there, by the way?

In the first century church, they were healing the sick, raising the dead, they were prophesying, they were operating in the gifts of the spirit, as well as great gifts of encouragement. The first century church didn’t have the New Testament. Did you know that? They wrote the New Testament! Because of the all-surpassing power that was within them. So if you want that in your life, you can have that in your life, and this is the answer: “We are hard pressed on every side but not crushed. Perplexed but not in despair. Persecuted but not abandoned. Struck down but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For

we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake," why? "So that His life may also be revealed in our mortal body. So then death is at work in us, but life is at work in you." What is He talking about there? The Pasqual Mystery. When you kill something that is in Christ, you only give it more life. You want to know how to grow a church, how to make a church bigger, make worshipping and gathering illegal. You want to make a church thrive and have all surpassing power? Persecute it. Go after it. Hurt it. Harm it. Curse it. This is how believers grow is being pressed but not crushed, persecuted, not abandoned, and struck down but not destroyed.

That is the amazing thing about the Pasqual Mystery. It is the life of Christ within us that in our baptism, when we receive this gift, we received something amazing. And even when we die, we are given the life of Christ in our death. Isn't that amazing? If you don't know Christ, when you come to face the judgment seat of the Father, you will have to show Him your resume: the good you did and the bad you did, and you'll be judged based on that. But if you are a believer, you show Him Jesus' resume. You show Him what Christ did on your behalf so that He who knew no sin, became sin that we could be called what? The righteousness of God. I don't know about you, I don't want God to judge me based on my resume. If I get to choose between my resume and Jesus' resume, I'm choosing Christ' resume, how about you. And that's precisely what it means to be saved. It means that the death and the life

of Jesus is within us. But don't miss that. You can't have the life of Jesus without also embracing what? His death. Living within His death means living within His life. You take that Pasqual Mystery.

I want you to know this. You are Pasqual. You are anti-fragile. The thing the enemy wants most in the life of believers is to keep them comfy. Rest is good, good meals are good, but we also must understand that in life it is the punches, it is trouble that makes us more like Jesus. It is pain, it is obstacles. As Marcus Aurelius said, "fire feeds on obstacles." So does a believer.

And this is precisely what it means to be Pasqual or in Taleb's philosophy, anti-fragile. I love Taleb, who by the way is a Christian, and loves to describe this idea as anti-fragile, and this is where we're going to get a little academic.

What does anti-fragile mean? So anti-fragile is like this. Imagine you had.. this is what Taleb says. Imagine you had a box of champagne glasses and you were going to mail them to your brother in New York City. You would put these expensive champagne glasses in a box, you'd tape it up real nice and you would put maybe popcorn inside, and then you would write something on the side of the box to make sure it was handled with care. You would write "fragile" right? And fragile usually means that the thing within the box is precious to you. It's probably expensive, but it's also delicate. That if it's put on the bottom of a pile, or if it's bumped the wrong way that the things, or all of the things inside

could break and even become worthless, so that even though it's expensive and precious, it's also at risk of being destroyed.

What is the opposite of that, by the way, do you know? How would you answer? Most people would get it wrong. Most people would say the opposite of fragile is something like resilient or robust. In other words, a box of bowling balls, for example, or a box of I don't know footballs or something that no matter how bad it got hit or beaten around or tossed, it'd be fine when it got there.

But that is not the opposite of fragile. That's neutral. Like what's the opposite of positive? The opposite of positive is not neutral. The opposite of positive is negative. So the opposite of fragile is not robust or resilient, the opposite of fragile is anti-fragile. That is to say if you beat it up and tossed it around, it'd get better. Right? It'd get stronger. Somehow if champagne glasses, imagine they could be anti-fragile, in a way, you'd want them to break because when they got there, there'd be somehow more glasses and they'd be prettier and worth more. In other words, your box would look like this: "anti-fragile – please mishandle." You know something in the box would get better if it were beaten up. It wouldn't merely stay the same.

Another way to look at anti-fragile is through fairy stories, or through a myth, and this is what Taleb says. It's like the difference between the sword of Damocles versus Hydra the snake. So in the story of Damocles, Damocles is in the court of Dionysius of Syracuse.

Dionysius the second was this tyrant, this king, and Damocles said oh king, you're so great. What would it be like to be you for just a day? And of course Dionysius the second says well let me show you. Have a seat. You can become king for a day.

And of course Damocles thinks this is a great idea, so he's placed on the throne, given all the king's power for a day, he gets all the king's women, all the king's food, all the king's armies, everything. He can make any decision with one catch – a sword is dangled over his head with the hilt up, hanging by a single horse hair and he has to remain in the seat.

Now this is what Taleb says is what it's like for fragile systems and fragile people. That there are people in power, people with wealth, people that seem like they're great and the message is of course like even though Dionysius has all of this, or even though Damocles has all this power and wealth and women, there's this sword looming over his head. He is not robust or anti-fragile. He is fragile. The slightest bit of wind, small bump, and he's a dead man.

Taleb compares that to Hydra the Snake who, if you brushed up on your Greek myth, Hydra the Snake was the fairy story creature that guards a lake, and he has three heads or four heads or five heads, but the idea is that every time you cut off one of his heads, two grow back. So that the more you attack Hydra, the stronger he gets. And this is the image of what it means to be anti-fragile. It's strong, powerful, and the

only way to get an anti-fragile being defeated is to leave it alone! Is to handle with care. Is to make it comfortable.

And of course there's lots of things that are anti-fragile both in myth and in real life. Of course probably the most well-known anti-fragile character in American myth is the Incredible Hulk, right? I mean everybody knows. Once Hulk starts smashing, don't shoot him! Don't attack him, just leave him alone, sing him a lullaby. Hulk is the ultimate anti-fragile mythological character. Hulk - the madder he gets, the stronger he gets.

And there are real things in life that are anti-fragile. Bamboo is anti-fragile. If you've been cursed with having bamboo grow in your backyard do not cut down bamboo or you're going to get ten times more in its place. Trees are anti-fragile, to a degree. If you cut branches off a tree, it'll become stronger, right? Bigger, more green. Even a forest itself is anti-fragile. If a whole forest burns down, a new stronger, better forest will replace it, right? Greek fire is anti-fragile. Jujitsu is anti-fragile. Jujitsu, you use the inertia of your opponent, the attacks of your opponent against them. Without them attacking you, Jujitsu is useless. The human body itself is anti-fragile, right? I mean exercising with weights, you're literally damaging the muscle fibers in your body so that they become tougher, stronger and you can lift more weights.

So anti-fragile means that when you attack something, it comes back stronger. It doesn't merely stay the same. Books are anti-fragile.

One of the best things you can do to help an author is to criticize his book. The best thing you can do for an author is to outlaw his book. Can I just tell you, if the U.S. government declared that *You Are Beloved*, the book I just released is now forbidden to be read in the United States of America and anyone caught reading it will be penalized. I'm taking everybody out to dinner, if that happens. It's like the greatest thing that could happen, right? It's like ooo, what's this book? Every newspaper would talk about it. Everybody would want to read it. The price of *You Are Beloved* on EBay would go through the roof.

So it's anti-fragile. You attack a book, you burn books, you ban books, you make them stronger, better. Same with any idea. Art is anti-fragile. This is why artists love being criticized. This is why artists do so many things that are ridiculous, or disgusting, or whatever. They're trying to get people to criticize them because art is anti-fragile. The worst thing you can say about art is 'trust me, it's great, you should go see it. It's terrific.' That's the worst thing you can say for art. The best thing you can say for art is say don't ever go there. Don't ever listen to that. Don't ever look at that. Everybody's like oooo, what is that? Something I want to know, right? Ooo, interesting.

Recently in pop culture, one of the world's greatest rappers, famous rappers Eminem was criticized by another local kind of no name rapper named Machine Gun Kelly, a local rapper in Cleveland. And this rapper in Cleveland, Machine Gun Kelly did like a diss video about

Eminem and all this, and it kind of went viral on YouTube, but nobody had really ever heard of Machine Gun Kelly, and Eminem did the dumbest thing you can do to art you want to disappear: he criticized it. He responded with his own rap song, criticizing Machine Gun Kelly trying to destroy him, and all he did was cut off the snakes of Hydra. Machine Gun Kelly's record went to number one on the billboard, overnight.

See this is what it means to be anti-fragile. Love is anti-fragile. If your daughter is dating a boy and you don't like him, the worst thing you can do for that love relationship is to tell her 'stop dating that boy, he's trouble.' Right? It's anti-fragile. The best thing you can do is to say 'he's a sweet boy.' If you want her to like break up with him, 'he's a sweet boy. You should see him more. When was the last time you called him?' That's how you destroy your teenager's relationship. You don't understand. It's just like putting a wet blanket on it. She's like oh, do I like him? I don't know. I don't know.

I was going to talk about certain politicians that were anti-fragile, but my wife forbade me. All of this to simply say that good or evil, there are anti-fragile systems, there are anti-fragile people, and there are fragile systems and fragile people. The way to destroy a fragile thing is to attack it. The way to destroy an anti-fragile thing is to make it comfortable and to handle it with care. Do you understand? You are anti-fragile. And this is the antidote to worrying is to understand that if bad

things happen to you tomorrow, they're going to help you. This is what it means to be Pasqual. Jesus Christ is the most anti-fragile being who has ever existed and ever will exist. Jesus Christ is the epitome of what it means to be anti-fragile. When they cursed Him, when they lied about Him, when they said that He was sent by demons, more people followed Him. More people talked about Him. The more they attacked Him, the more popular He got, until finally they crucified Him, which as His enemies, was the worst thing you can do to Jesus, if you want to get rid of Him. And through His death and resurrection, new life poured out into the universe. Everything changed. And in that moment, AD and BC, time was snapped in two like a twig, one author said in His death. Because that was the moment the grip of sin began to lose its grip on your life and on my life. The cross is the ultimate anti-fragility that life came into our world through it, and we're so thankful for the obedience of Christ on a cross. Thank you, Jesus.

And of course the church inherited that Pasqual anti-fragility that the church, in its inception, was persecuted, enslaved, beaten and it just spread like Greek fire. You watch as like in the first and second centuries of the church, when the Roman empire enslaved Christians and like shipped them around Europe, they were just spreading Christianity around. They weren't destroying it. That's why Tertullian said "the blood of martyrs is seed." That's why I said if you want to see a church grow,

make it illegal! Persecute it. Throw Christians in jail. And you just see that the church will grow and thrive.

I remember once there was girl who was doing missionary work in China, and she came back to our old church to testify about what God was doing. This was in the 90's when it was pretty bad. And one of the great leaders of the underground church said to her, when she said how can we pray for the church in China, she said pray that the government never stops persecuting us. He meant it. He understood that although it was evil, there was something good that happened to the church when it was harmed.

Even to this day, you see other Christian leaders, who by the way, the Civil Rights Movement, which was a Christian movement led by a Baptist minister named Dr. Martin Luther King. Rosa Parks, the same thing. Someone people knew was a good Christian woman who loved her neighbor and was respectable. When they put her, you know, when they showed her mug shot, it made people crazy mad, and they should have been because everybody knew she was a good person. She was anti-fragile. So was Dr. King. So is every Christian movement that is truly Christian. Everything that is good, that is loved by God and known by God is anti-fragile. Isn't that good news? You are anti-fragile.

And many of us, we forget this. We forget that its trouble, it's the hardships, it's the punches that very often make us better. This is the cure to worrying is to recognizing our anti-fragility and that's very, very

good news. You are so much stronger than you know because of Christ who lives in you.

So if you want to grow in your anti-fragility, and you want to worry less, here's four things in four minutes that you can do, according to this philosophy, if it's true, that will change your life, utterly.

The first is this: if my friend Hydra the Snake; let's just imagine Hydra the Snake and I are good friends. And Hydra comes over to my place and he's like Bobby, man I'm just so worried, man. I got all these Greek heroes are coming after me, bro. I don't know what I'm going to do. I've only got three heads. I'm worried, man. I got like Heracles, and Odysseus, and Achilles, and Hercules, and they're all coming after me, man. I don't know what to do. I'd be like Hydra, bro, go get a couple heads cut off right now. Go out there and pick a fight with someone before they get here. Go take a few punches. Go get stabbed a little bit so that you can go to bed with 19 heads and sleep it off. It's like a myth.. what is it called, Mythrodacith? What's the word. Mithridatism? Do you know that word? It's like when you take little bits of poison so that you become immune to the poison. That's how you stop worrying about poison. And that's how you stop worrying about life.

So the first thing is take some hits. Take some punches. If you haven't taken little hits, little punches in awhile, it needs to be a rhythm in your life. You need to encounter things that hurt, that stretch and that pull you so that you don't have three heads, you have 19 when trouble

comes. That's how you sleep well at night. Don't forget the rest part. This is an important part of a Christian and Jewish faith is Sabbath. We have to have at least one day a week where we can get a break from all of our punches.

Number two: love your enemies. The world, in a way, says criticize your enemies, talk badly about your enemies, lie about your enemies, get them back, assassinate, drive by, hurt, harm. This is how most people in politics on both side of the aisle act. This is not how Christians act. Christians love their enemies. You want to stop worrying about your enemies? Start loving them. This is what Lincoln said, actually when he said "I defeat my enemies by making them my friends." When you start to love your enemies, you practice what Dallas Willard called spiritual jujitsu. You use the harm that they have against you. This is a core principle that Jesus taught us to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. When you tip someone really well that gave you horrible service. When you say good things about your colleague that says bad things about you. When you're really heartbroken about your enemies and you pray for them and plead to God that He would turn their heart and change them and make them better, that's loving your enemies, and you'll watch how your worrying begins to go down and you become more anti-fragile and Pasqual.

Number three: this is hard for religious people. Be vulnerable and humble. Stop pretending you're perfect. That's not helping anybody. We

have to be humble around everybody, but we don't need to be vulnerable around everybody. Be vulnerable with your close friends and your family, with people you can trust. And be honest about the things you're wrestling with. When you are vulnerable you become strong. This is what Jesus teaches us. He who tries to save his life will lose it, but he who gives his life up for my sake will save it, right? It's the opposite. It's upside down. If you want to be strong, be vulnerable. If you want to be vulnerable and weak, try and pretend to be strong and be a tough guy.

Number four, finally, and the most important thing: you have to spend time with the master. If you want to conquer your worry and you want to become truly anti-fragile, you have to be a disciple. A disciple is someone who is disciplined. A disciple is a student. You have to be someone who spends time with the master, with Jesus praying, thinking, reading, studying every day. This is the most important thing any being can do to be happy, successful, overjoyed and live eternal life is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. It's more important than your errands, it's more important than your job, this is more important than going to the gym. If you have to choose between any of those things and being a disciple for some bizarre reason, you choose disciple. It is the most life-giving, most important thing. It is your oxygen. Prayer is oxygen. Without it, you will die spiritually. You need it to be alive and the more you do it, the more you want it because you see the fruit of what comes from that kind of life.

I want you to know that you're stronger than you think you are. I want you to know that trouble is good for you. That comfort is bad for you, if have too much of it. And that the cure to worry is to understand that God has made you an eternal being who is anti-fragile, that when harm is done to you, it's only going to spring forth new life. I believe that with all my heart.

Let's pray: Father, we thank you and we love you and we ask in Jesus' name that your Holy Spirit would fill our hearts and minds, Lord, that we would begin to walk in the all powerful gifts that you gave to the first century church and to Jesus Christ Himself, that we would see miracles in our workplace and in our family. That we would be in tune with the easy rhythms of grace. And Lord we love you and we thank you. I just pray that everyone under the sound of my voice, that chains even now would begin to break in their lives, Lord that they would be given true freedom and insight and vision, and we ask for all these things in Jesus' name, amen.