

God is our Refuge and Strength

Psalm 46

Introduction

We have been studying some of the great psalms this summer - - - and Psalm 46 ranks very high on many lists

Psalm 46:1 - 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.'

Verse 10 – is probably one of the most quoted verses from the Psalms

The King James is particularly memorable

Psalm 46:10 - 'Be still and know that I am God.' [KJV]

In our world - there are many things in life beyond our control

The Psalmist paints a word picture for us – of a world crumbling all around us

The mountains slipping into the sea / kingdoms tottering

But – for the Christian - - - God is a refuge – He is a mighty fortress

In fact – Psalm 46 was said to be the favorite Psalm of Martin Luther

One incident from his life particularly displayed this truth

Luther was under immense pressure from the RCC - - - to recant his Protestant views – teaching justification by faith

In 1520 - - - the Pope issued a letter to Luther – a Papal Bull – telling him to recant or be excommunicated. Luther responded by taking the papal letter and burning it publicly.

A decree was then issued for Luther to be arrested by the Holy Roman Emperor - - Charles V

Luther knew that he was in danger – [heretics had been burned at the stake for lesser crimes]

While travelling at this time – Luther was stopped by a masked horseman and essentially kidnapped - - - but taken to a castle in Germany – Where Frederick the Wise – had set up a place of refuge and safety for Luther in the Castle of Wartburg – a walled fortress. Luther hid out there for the better part of a year in safety - - - and while there translated the NT into German

The Protestant Reformation took off - - - it soon became apparent that the Catholic church had lost its grip on the religious environment of Europe

For Luther – sitting safe and secure in his walled fortress – with only a drawbridge for access - -
- He saw the providential protection of God on his life

From Psalm 46 – he found inspiration to write his famous hymn – ‘A Mighty Fortress’

Psalm 46 has a message that resonates across the centuries for the people of God

Human beings in this world are a vulnerable species – facing many threats and dangers to their peace and well-being

In all such things - - - God is a refuge who can be counted on

I. A Vulnerable Species - vv. 1-3

We see at the top of the Psalm – this is a psalm of the sons of Korah

The Sons of Korah are attributed with 11 of the Psalms

They were a branch of the Levites - - - appointed by David to serve as singers in the tabernacle

They had other duties - - some made the showbread / some were gatekeepers

This Psalm reminds us what a difference God makes when unsettling events / threatening circumstances arise in our lives

The Christian has a refuge in which to turn

Anne Lamott: 'This is a hard planet, and we're a vulnerable species.'

What are we vulnerable to?

We are vulnerable to natural disasters – earthquakes / tornadoes / floods

We are vulnerable to disease / pandemics /

9/11 – reminded us we are vulnerable to terrorist attacks / plane crashes

Author Ryan Nelson – flew on 9/11 - 2020

Ryan Nelson: 'Does it freak you out at all to fly on 9/11? I will admit, there were a few moments of unease when I was at the airport and on my flight last year.' [2020]

I think part of my paranoia was the fact that we all had to wear face masks because of COVID. Everybody just looks like they have bad intentions when you

can't see their face! And standing in line to get through TSA security I found myself eyeballing everybody and wondering what suspicious behavior they were up to. All that, and throw in the fact that every bit of turbulence was amplified 100 times because the smallest bounce had me thinking "this is it, we're going down!"

We know that life involves risk - - - and we are a vulnerable species - - - no matter what we choose to do with our day – or not do

Things like car accidents / heart attacks / violent crime / political instability / economic instability / war / international conflict

Any number of things can unsettle our peace or bring harm our way

Job 14:1, 2 - 'Man, who is born of woman, is short-lived and full of turmoil. Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain.'

Elizabeth Elliot referred to this Psalm – after her 2nd husband died.

She was married to Jim Elliot – who was martyred by the Auca Indians in Ecuador – later married her 2nd husband Addison Leitch – who died about 3 ½ years later of cancer.

She wrote of her feelings at the time

Elizabeth Elliot: 'everything that has seemed most dependable has given way. Mountains are falling, earth is reeling. In such a time it is a profound comfort to know that although all things seem to be shaken, one thing is not: God is not shaken.'

Where did she find solid footing beneath her feet? [in God]

Robert Alden: 'Though the world is in turmoil, in our God there is quiet and safety.'

In God there is always a sanctuary for the soul

Some people turn to the wrong things to give them peace or security

- Alcohol / drugs [just mask the insecurity] / dull the senses

Matthew Perry turned here - - - to Vicodin / Ketamine / other drugs

But drugs were not a good refuge - - - caused his own death - - - and likely the imprisonment of his drug suppliers

- Money – get a boat load of money

Money is no refuge - - - itself is part of the instability of our world

In the 1920's – Germany experienced hyper-inflation

In mid-1922 – 320 M = \$1

Dec. 1922 – 7400 M = \$1

Nov. 1923 – [4 trillion] 4,210,500,000,000 M = \$1

No wonder they were ready for Hitler! - - - it led to political instability

Money is no refuge

Prov. 23:4,5 - 'Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings, like an eagle that flies toward the heavens.'

- We can look to man and his wisdom – listen to the experts

The experts will tell us how to navigate thru the latest world crisis

Neil Miller – aged 50 – developed fatal blood clots after receiving the Astra Zeneca covid vaccine. His wife is now suing the company. She is not anti-vaccine but believes the company let them down

Mrs Miller said her husband was fit and healthy - the coach of a youth football team - but became seriously ill after he was vaccinated.

Mrs. Miller was compensated 120,000 British Pounds through the government's Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme - - - but believes that her husband's life was worth more than that – and her needs are greater as he was the breadwinner of the family

Sometimes in life - - - the experts can let us down in dramatic fashion

World upheaval and trial is part and parcel of this planet we live on

Psalm 46 invites us to take refuge in God

Mark 4:35-41

Here are the disciples in the midst of a storm

This passage is about more than simply bad weather – it's about where we look / who we trust in a storm

If Jesus is with us - - - we need not fear the storm

Samuel Rutherford: 'Think not much of a storm upon the sea when Christ is in the ship.'

v. 35 – Jesus led them out into the sea – this storm was in the path of obedience - - - they were following Jesus

He wanted to use this storm to teach them about who He is and that they can trust Him in the storms

They have enrolled in Jesus' school

In this discipleship lab - - He reminded them - - - they are not in control - - - but they know the One who is - - - and they can trust Him!

*** We don't like the feeling of not being in control

But – it is our vulnerabilities that are designed to lead us back to the Father

Just as the disciples turned to Jesus here

Jesus gets up and calms the storm with a word – the winds die down / the waves become calm - - - all is peace

II. Be Still and Know - vv. 4-11

Psalm 46:10 - 'Be still and know that I am God.' [KJV]

v. 10 – 'Be still and know that He is God.' – refers to a calm trust in God

How can we be still?

We have so many things to be anxious about

People are anxious about the future / the state of the economy / global conflict / crime / violence in our cities / etc.

We have eco-anxiety – climate change

We have election anxiety

We have anxiety about diseases / pandemics

Peace of mind can be in short supply in our world

How can we be still?

By letting God be God

This is what Peter called us to:

I Peter 5:6, 7 - 'Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.'

That is being still and knowing that He is God

Corrie Ten Boom: 'There is no pit so deep that Jesus is not deeper still.'

Some people with heart conditions – when they go to the doctors – they might give them a stress test - - - where they have to walk on a treadmill – or do something to get the heart going

In this state – the doctors can better see the condition of the heart – how it handles a little bit of pressure / they can assess better what might need to be done

We don't see how strong a tree is or a house until we see it battered by a storm

We watched a rather large tree come down - - - in the side yard of the old parsonage – good thunderstorm was taking place - - - it was no longer a sturdy tree - - fell just parallel with the house – [the tree was weak / compromised]

It's the same in our spiritual lives

The storms – reveal the depth of our faith

Faith says – God is bigger than this storm – we can be still and know that He is God

One woman encountered a storm - - - somewhat of her own making

She faced a storm of judgment for her sin - - but she found refuge in an unexpected place - -
- in Jesus Himself

John 8:1-11

This woman - had been caught in sin – committing adultery - - - which was a punishable offense under Jewish law

They drag this woman before Jesus – she has been taken in adultery – the very act - and bring her before Him

They have the stones in their hands - - - they are ready to carry out an execution

They aren't really concerned about the woman – they want to catch Jesus in some kind of statement they can use against Him

But – Jesus' response stuns them

He says: 'Let him who is without sin be the first to cast the stone . . .' - - - stones drop

Does that mean Jesus doesn't care about the sin?

No – in fact - - - He tells the woman to go and sin no more - - - [that is called repentance in theology]

In mercy – He invites the sinner to leave their sin and follow Him

John 3:17 - 'For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.' [kjb]

There is refuge for the sinner - - - but we have to come thru the cross / thru the blood of Jesus

John MacArthur: 'The cross is proof of both the immense love of God and the profound wickedness of sin.'

Outside of Christ – the Law of God says we are guilty and under condemnation – and we justly deserve this condemnation

When we take refuge in Jesus - - - He cleanses us / He washes us / He forgives us / He tells us to go and sin no more

When we take refuge in Jesus - - - we find that He took our sins / our guilt to the cross - - - and paid for it all

And now we too hear the Savior say – 'no condemnation'

Romans 8:1 - 'There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.'

Conclusion

How do we get in Christ Jesus?

Romans 10:13 - 'For whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.'

God be merciful to me the sinner - - - I believe Jesus died for me

David Dickson: 'I have taken all my good deeds, and all my bad deeds, and have cast them together in a heap before the Lord, and have fled from both to Jesus Christ, and in Him I have sweet peace.'

Take refuge in Jesus and you will have peace