

Be Still

Series: I Will Praise You In This Storm

Psalm 46

August 8, 2021

Good morning and welcome once again to worship.

At my father's funeral 10 years ago, a song by the group Casting Crowns was played. While we cannot play the video for copyright purposes, I hope I can share with you some of the lyrics without us getting a warning on YouTube or Facebook:

I was sure by now God, You would have reached down

And wiped our tears away Stepped in and saved the day

And once again I say, "A-men" and it's still rainin'

... But as the thunder rolls I barely hear Your whisper through the rain

"I'm with you"

And as Your mercy falls I'll raise my hands and praise the God who gives

And takes away

... And I'll praise You in this storm And I will lift my hands

For You are who You are No matter where I am

And every tear I've cried You hold in Your hand

You never left my side And though my heart is torn

I will praise You in this storm

While I don't agree with all the theology of this song, it has been on that has come to my mind countless times in the last decade. And why not? We have seen so much sorrow and pain. We have wondered how we have survived and thought it couldn't get worse, and then it did.

Fortunately for us, God knew our cries before the first tear fell, and gave us words to pray and claim when our own words were too painful to speak. For in the Bible are the Psalms, places to go when we are hurting, frightened, confused, and sorrowful.

During the next few weeks, we will look at five Psalm that speak to us in our storms. I invite you to turn to page 6 in your bulletin, or if you are online, grab your spiritual notebook and turn in your Bible to Psalm 46.

Charles Spurgeon, the great English Baptist preacher of the 19th century, called Psalm 46 the "**Song of Holy Comfort**." It is indeed a comfort to all God's people. It gives assurance of Divine help especially when it is needed the most—in the time of trouble.

Psalm 46 is the inspiration of Martin Luther's great hymn. "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," the one we sang today. Psalms 46-48 are hymns of praise, celebrating deliverance from some great foe. Psalm 46 may have been written when the Assyrian army invaded the land and surrounded Jerusalem.¹

The title in the Hebrew is, "To the chief musician for the sons of Korah; an ode upon *Alamoth*, or concerning the virgins." *Alamoth* probably means a choir of singing girls, a **women's ensemble**.²

There is another word I want to define, and it is used often in the Psalms. Look at the end of verse 3, then verse 7, and finally verse 11. There is the word *Selah*. Our guide on our first trip to the Holy Land was named *Selah*. *Selah* is defined as a Hebrew

¹ Life Application Study Bible, Psalm 46

² Adam Clarke's Commentary, Psalm 46

word that has been found at the ending of verses in Psalms and has been interpreted as an instruction calling for a **break** in the singing of the Psalm. It may mean “**forever**” or **ponder** what has been sung. Selah is used seventy-one times in the Psalms and three times in Habakkuk.

There are three divisions in Psalm 46, with Selah serving as the end of each point.

First, the Promise of Help.

Verses 1-3 begin abruptly:

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Selah³

It begins abruptly, but nobly; you may trust in whom and in what you please, but God (*Elohim*) is three things:

God is **our refuge.**

What do you think of when you heard the word refuge? It is a safe and secure place.

It is God, not the government or anyone or anything else, who is our chief help in time of trouble. Many have trusted in the government to help them only to find out that the government’s help is unreliable at best. Many have trusted in insurance policies, friends, and investments for help only to learn that they often fail when needed the most.⁴

Psalm 14:6 reads:

The wicked frustrate the plans of the oppressed, but the LORD will protect his people.⁵

We will look at Psalm 91 in a month, but for now, listen to the first two verses:

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”⁶

He is our refuge in the storm.

God is our strength.

I saw a picture of an athlete this week who was striking a pose. He had a sleeveless shirt on and was flexing his muscles. You know, like I do. Anywhere, enough dreaming. This guy was ripped. I looked at the picture and thought, “That’s okay for now, but don’t trust in it.”

J.R. Richard was a flame-throwing right-handed pitcher with the Houston Astros. I remember watching him and thinking, “Wow, he throws fast.” People couldn’t hit him. At the age of 30, in the prime of his career, he had a stroke, and that was it. He past away this week at the age of 71.

We cannot depend upon our own strength. We try. We bulk up. We try to do things using our own resources, intelligence, experience, and insight. But we fail.

God is our only strength, and if you are relying on your own, you will falter.

God is our help.

³ Psalm 46:1-3 (NIV)

⁴ Analytical Bible Expositor – Psalms 46:1

⁵ Psalm 14:6 (NLT2)

⁶ Psalm 91:1-2 (NIV)

The NIV translates this “an ever-present help.” The words are very emphatic: He is found an exceeding, or superlative help in difficulties. This is a help found to be very powerful and effectual in straits and difficulties.⁷

Therefore, because “God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble,” we will not fear:

First, when our foundation gives away.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way...⁸

When the ground shakes. When everything we depend upon moves out from under us, we will not fear.

Second, when our dreams fall from the sky.

Therefore we will not fear, though... the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,⁹

When the mountains, the things that inspire us, disappear in a moment, , we will not fear.

Third, when the unexpected tragedy happens.

Therefore we will not fear, though [the] waters roar and foam...¹⁰

Have you ever seen video of a flash flood? It could be a dry riverbed one moment, then a torrent the next. That’s why it’s called a flash flood; it comes upon you in a second. Yet, we will not fear.

Finally, when those we look up to are no longer strong.

Therefore we will not fear, though... the mountains quake with their surging.¹¹

Has there ever been someone you looked up to who failed you, who disappointed you? Myra deals with children all the time whose parents betray them time after time.

The fear of mountains or cities suddenly crumbling into the sea as the result of an earthquake or a nuclear blast haunts many people today. But the psalm writer says that even if the world were to end, we need not fear. In the face of utter destruction, the writer expressed a quiet confidence in God’s ability to save him. It seems impossible to consider the end of the world without becoming consumed by fear, but the Bible is clear-God is our refuge even in the midst of total destruction. He is not merely a temporary retreat; he is our eternal refuge and can provide strength in any circumstance.¹²

The second section tells us The Prospects in Help.

Verses 4-7:

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah¹³

Many great cities have rivers flowing through them, sustaining people’s lives by making agriculture possible and facilitating trade with other cities. Jerusalem had no river, but it had God, who, like a river, sustained the people’s lives. As long as God lived

⁷ Adam Clarke’s Commentary, Psalm 46:1

⁸ Psalm 46:2 (NIV)

⁹ Psalm 46:2 (NIV)

¹⁰ Psalm 46:2-3 (NIV)

¹¹ Psalm 46:2-3 (NIV)

¹² Life Application Study Bible, Psalm 46:1-3

¹³ Psalm 46:4-7 (NIV)

among the people, the city was invincible. But when the people abandoned him, God no longer protected them, and Jerusalem fell to their enemies.¹⁴

Verse 5 says that God is in the midst of our fear. God will not abandon we who trust in Him; He will maintain His own cause. When we find ourselves in fear, whether it is in our own lives, even in the life of our church and denomination. God will help us. God is there to resist the fear and evil of the world. As the daybreak vanquished the shadows and darkness, so the Lord will scatter our foes and the fear of the storm.

The final section gives us The Praise for Help.

Verses 8-11:

Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah¹⁵

Be still, and know that I am God;¹⁶

If you want to find peace in the midst of the storm, then you must:

Be still. That means stop talking, switch off your phone, stop commenting, listen, stop arguing, stop questioning, stop moaning.

Know. That means stop doubting, be sure, have faith, no second opinion.

I am God. That means God is almighty, God is in control, God is love, God is king, God is my hope, rock, fortress, an ever-present help in times of trouble, God is my Father, God is my shepherd – He will lead me, nourish me, protect me, and restore me.

Be still, and know that I am God;¹⁷

One of the most comforting verses of all Scripture. *Be still, and know that I am God.*

A pastor once shared the story of his grandfather who died when he was four or five. His parent loaded him and his four older brothers in their 1964 Chevy Bel Air and headed to his grandparents' home. My mom announced that grandfather was weak and they should NOT be climbing on him.

When they went in and the adults were sitting in the front room, soon the boy climbed into his grandfather's lap. His mother looked right at him and said, "What did I tell you?" The grandfather said, "Where else should he be?"

There are people in our lives who are telling us God doesn't want a relationship with us, that God is too busy to be bothered. But that is where we belong in a loving relationship with God sitting and listening and being loved, especially within the storm.

¹⁴ Life Application Study Bible, Psalm 46:4, 5

¹⁵ Psalm 46:8-11 (NIV)

¹⁶ Psalm 46:10a (NIV)

¹⁷ Psalm 46:10a (NIV)