

## GOD, OUR VERY PRESENT HELP

## Psalm 46:1

Intro: This is a verse which has been a source of comfort to the people of God ever since it was written. It would be impossible to calculate how many times the Lord's people have been encouraged by this Psalm. This Psalm provided the inspiration for Martin Luther's great hymn, A Mighty Fortress. In fact, it is remembered as Luther's Psalm. In times when the Reformer and his friends were faced with what seemed to be insurmountable difficulties, he would turn to them, especially Melancthon, as say, "Come, Philip, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm."

Although the writer of the Psalm is not mentioned, it very likely was written by David. And the superscription indicates that it was written for "the sons of Korah," which means it was for a special group of singers. We also learn that it was accompanied by an instrument called the Alamoth. It is difficult to determine exactly what this instrument was, but it is generally thought to have been a high sounding instrument, and the word also indicates according to some that the music was pitched for soprano voices. Perhaps the idea was that even otherwise defenseless women could sing in absolute security because their hope was in the Lord.

It should be noted that the Psalm is expressed in the first person plural: our, we, us. The Psalm is a Psalm of praise to God, but in the next to the last verse we have God responding to the worship and adoration of His people. But it was very important for each singer to make sure that this was a personal testimony, not just a psalm sung by a group.

It should be noted also that the prominent name for Deity which is used throughout the Psalm is "God." This is Elohim. It is a word which was often used of heathen gods, but it appears in this form to express the idea that the singers were rejoicing in all the Members of the Godhead.

The Psalm obviously reflected turbulent days in Israel's history. Israel then, was like Israel today, surrounded by enemies, and outnumbered by them. There was no way that Israel could have survived apart from the constant care and intervention of God, the mighty One, the Creator, the One Who had appointed to each nation its place.

The refrain in the Psalm is easy to find. It is given in verse 7, and then is repeated in verse 11 at the end of the Psalm. (Read.) It states in other words the truth which we have in our Golden Text, but it introduces the only two times in the Psalm in which God is referred to as "the Lord"

--"the Lord of hosts," Jehovah of hosts, indicating that the Lord had forces which could be called to Israel's defence which were superior to any combination of human armies which might come against the people of God.

We ought to notice also that the Psalmist, in verses 7 and 11, speaks of "God" as "the God of Jacob." Undoubtedly this was said in all humility because it would have reminded the children of Israel of God's grace to His servant in former days. So often when the Lord's people needed help, they would have looked in vain into their own lives to find some reason as to why God should help them. But "the God of Jacob" means that He is a God of grace, a God of mercy and compassion. It is used this way many, many times in the writings of the prophets.

In the verse which God responded to His people (since the writer of the Psalm was speaking by divine revelation), we see that He was calling upon them, as the NASB has translated it, to cease striving, to relax. It is a word in which He was calling upon them even with all of the truth that had been expressed in the Psalm, for them not only to trust in the Lord, but to rest in Him. And to make sure that their trusting would not be in vain, He gave them His two I will's. They were to remember who He was, to begin with, and then to believe His promises so that they could be at rest. The Psalm then ends with a restatement of their former expression of faith.

Now let us look at our Golden Text, verse 1.

In the Hebrew it reads like this: GOD TO US REFUGE AND STRENGTH, HELP IN TROUBLE VERY PRESENT.

And so we have:

#### I. AN ABRUPT BEGINNING.

They singers started with God. They did not talk about their troubles first, but they turned immediately to God. They did not delight in their armies, as great as they might have been, not did they shrink at the thought of what their enemies might do. Their thoughts turned to God immediately.

Cf. Isa. 26:3, 4.

It is so easy for us to forget the God Whom we cannot see and be overwhelmed with the visible dangers or troubles which are upon us. But faith lays hold immediately on God.

Bound up in this prominent name for God, the first that is

used in Scripture is the idea that He is a God of power. He is the Mighty One, or as our Lord is referred to in Isa. 9:6, "the mighty God." There is no one like Him in power. He is greater than all of the creatures He has created. And for Him to be both "Lord" and "God," as He is declared to be in verses 7 and 11 (the refrain), means that whatever He has been able to do in the past, He still can do.

When we read our Bibles, let us learn to focus our attention upon what it says about the Members of the Godhead. "God" applies equally to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, the triune God.

Now look at:

## II. THE SITUATION DESCRIBED.

It is "trouble."

This word is translated elsewhere in our Bibles, adversity, affliction, anguish, distress, and tribulation. It can include a host of things. Verses 2 and 3 speak of upheavals in nature--earthquakes, storms. Verses 6, 8, and 9 speak of what hostile armies could do, and what God has done, and will do to them. Even prophecy enters into the comfort of this Psalm.

We have all kinds of troubles that we are liable to experience in this world. All are designed to bring us to the place where the Psalmist was spiritually when He wrote this Psalm. It makes no difference what the trouble is the important thing is for us to know how God can help us, and how He has pledged Himself to help us. Any time there is trouble Psalm 46 is one of the Psalms we need to come to.

Finally, let us look at:

## III. WHAT THE LORD WILL BE TO HIS PEOPLE IN TIMES OF TROUBLE.

He is:

### A. "Our refuge."

He is our place of refuge. He is a strong tower for us. The word also gives the idea of hope. We are hopeless without Him, but absolutely secure with Him.

The word "refuge" in vv. 7 and 11 (the refrain) is a different word, but the idea is the same, but there the idea of a high tower, a place of defense is perhaps more in view.

B. "Our...strength."

He not only is strong to defend us, but He makes us strong. Cf. Paul's words in Phil. 4:13. Cf. also Isa. 40:31. He is the One Who enables us to stand against the Enemy of our souls. We have no strength in ourselves, but when we are weak, then we are strong if we have made our God our Refuge.

But the question might arise, Where can we find this great and mighty God of ours when we need Him?

This is the truth that makes this verse so wonderful. He is:

C. "A very present help."

This means not only that He is nearby, but that He is exceedingly sufficient to do whatever needs to be done. After all, has he not promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Cf. Heb. 13:5, 6. And so what can we say? "The Lord is my helper..."

Concl: What a treasure this verse and this Psalm are. But just suppose you were in the choir singing this song, just like we sing, A Mighty Fortress. Would they be mere words, or would they come from our hearts?

It is good for us to be able to say, "God is **our** refuge and strength," but let us not be satisfied until we learn to say every day that we live that He is **my** "refuge and strength." That is where the blessing will come when we can say this from our hearts.